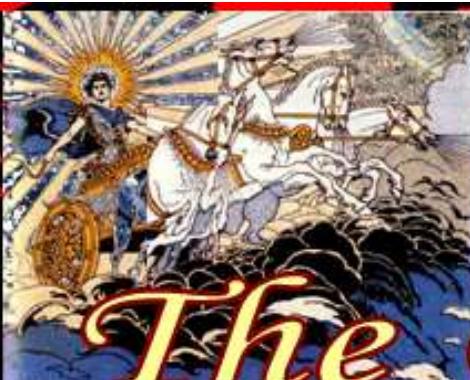


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# The Glefisa of the Ancients

Spring

Summer

North  
Star

Winter

Fall

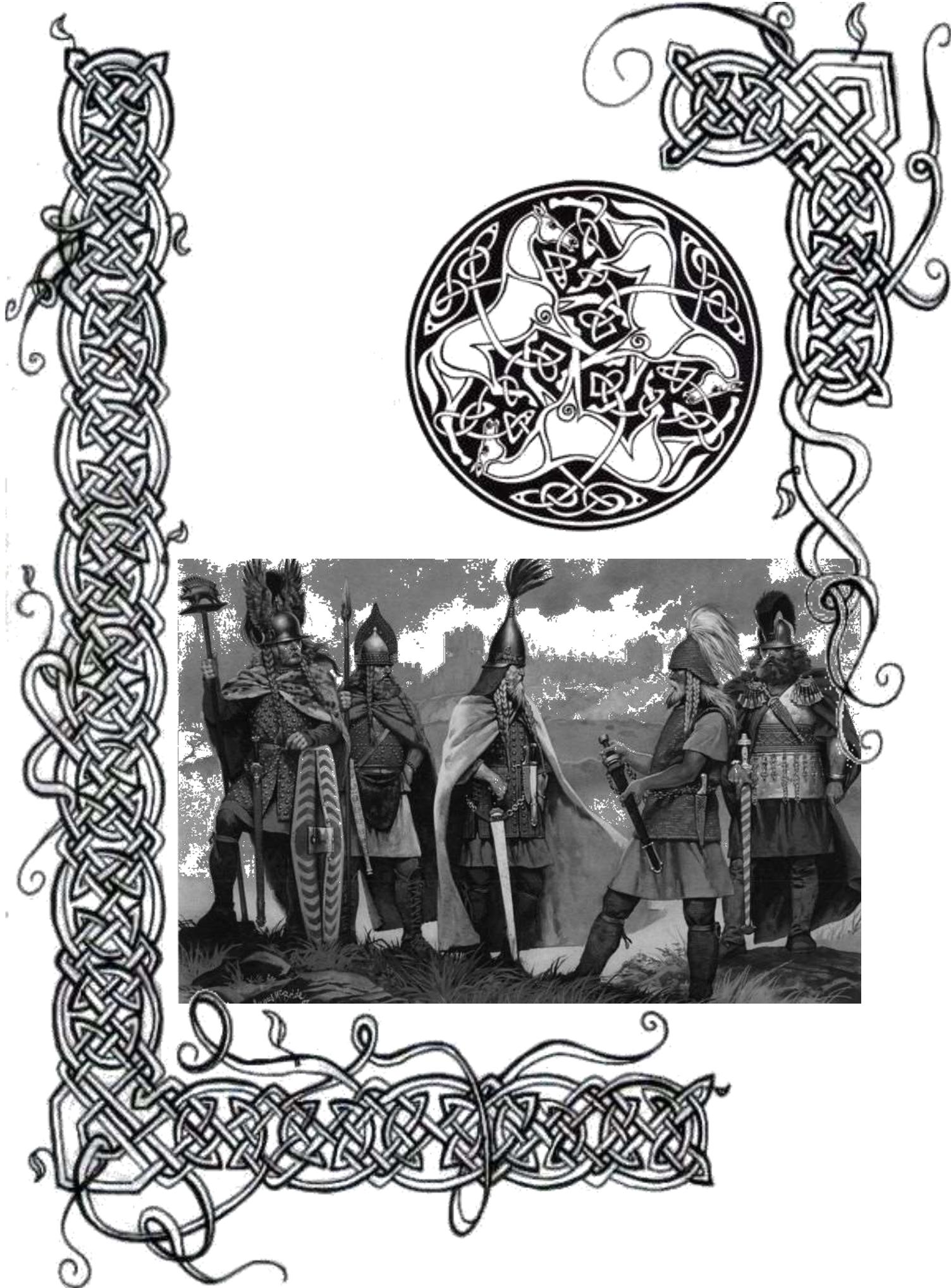
Darcy John Bouchard, Si Ex̄ouiſe

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## The Celtic Myths

### The Glefisa (Bright Knowledge) of the Ancients

#### Part the First

##### I. Cesair

One of the earliest arrivals in Ireland, **Cesair**, a priestess, was the daughter of *Bith, son of Noah*, and his wife Bairffhind.

The first settlers reached Ireland before the flood...: Although *Bith* was denied a place in the Ark, he was fortunate to be advised by God to build his own boat.

*Cesair*, a formidable girl, guided him to this decision as well.

When *Cesair* was ten years old, she ordained that an idol should be made to serve as an oracle for their tribe, to advise them in all matters.

*Bith*, her father, wrought the idol, and charmed it with magical enchantments.

The idol spake unto her and told her to gather a group together and set out in three ships for the western edge of the world.

They sailed for seven years, eventually reaching **Inis Fáil** (Land of Destiny, or Ireland), at Dun na mBarc (*on Bantry Bay in County Cork*), forty days before the Flood;

however, two of the ships were lost when they attempted to land.

*Cesair*, with forty-nine other women, each with a different skill, and three men - *Cesair's father Bith*, Fionntan mac Bóchra the Wise, a seer, and the navigator, *Ladra* - were the only survivors.

*Cesair* married Fionntan mac Bóchra the Wise and shared out the other women between the men.

Fionntan mac Bóchra's other wives were: Lot, Luam, Mall, Mar, Froear, Femar, Faible, Foroll, Cipmac Bóchir, Torrain, Tam, Abba, Baichne and Sille.

He married Ebliu later.

His only son was Illann.

To *Bith*, her father, she gave: Bairffhind, Sella, Della, Duib, Addeos, Fotra, Traige, Nera, Buana, Tamall, Tanna, Nathra, Leos, Fodarg, Rodarg, Dos, and Clos.

And to bold *Ladra* the fair company of: Alba, Bona, Albor, Ail, Gotham, German, Aithne, Inde, Rodarg, Rinne, Iachor, Ain, Irrand, Espa, Sine, and Samoll.

Each man had a primary wife: Fionntan mac Bóchra took *Cesair*, *Bith* took Bairffhind and *Ladra* took Alba.

They also divided up the sheep they had brought with them - *the first sheep in Ireland*.

Banbha, a great warrior-woman, was the leader of *Ladra*'s group. *Ladra* died at Wexford - becoming the first man buried in Ireland.

*Bith* also died - *of exhaustion, overwhelmed by all the women* - and a great stone-heap covered him, which was known as *Sliab Beta*. Fionntan mac Bóchra was left all alone with the fifty women... these placing too much responsibility on him, so he fled.

So grieved was *Cesair*, abandoned by her great love, that she died of a broken heart at *Cúil Ceasrach* in Connaught - and a cairn was raised over her body at Knockma.<sup>1</sup>

Six days later, Fionntan mac Bóchra's wives and children were drowned when the rising waters of the Flood engulfed the land.

However, Fionntan mac Brócrá the Wise saved himself by shape-shifting into *a salmon*, and remained a year in a cave called *Fionntan's Grave*, on *Tul Tuinde* (*Hill of the Wave*).<sup>2</sup>

He then turned into an eagle and then a hawk and then back to human form.

He lived for 5500 years after the Deluge, becoming an advisor to the kings of Ireland.

In this capacity he gave advice to the last **Fir Bholg** High King *Eochaid son of Eirc* when the Tuatha Dé Danaan invaded, and he fought in the *First Battle of Cét-chath Maighe Tuireadh*.

##### II. Partholón and the People of Neimheadh



I

i

One hundred years after the Flood, *Cichol Gricenchos* son of *Niul* son of *Garf* son of *Uadmōr*, who gave a name to the mountain *Slieve Umōr*, whose mother was *Lot Luaimnech*, came to Ireland in fifty ships,

with two hundred men and six hundred women.

They were a cruel race of pirates having one arm and one leg each - the semi-divine sea-roving **Fomhoiréans**.

They landed at *Inver Domnan* and lived two hundred years by fishing and fowling on the coast...

<sup>1</sup> *Carn Ceasrach* is near Boyle, in County Roscommon, or alternatively that it is *Cnoc Meadha* in County Galway.

<sup>2</sup> *Fintan's Grave*, on *Tul Tuinde* (*Hill of the Wave*) is in the Arra Mountains near Lough Derg, which is the largest lake within the Shannon River Basin.



The first race which inhabited Ireland perished in the Biblical Flood. It was followed two hundred and sixty-eight years later, on *the first of May*, during the feast of **Bealtaine**<sup>3</sup> ("bright fire") or *Céad Shamain*,

by a group of twenty-four males and twenty-four females led from the Land of the Dead<sup>4</sup> by **Partholón son of Sera son of Sru, the king of Greece, son of Esru son of Goídel Glas son of Nuilson of Fenias Farsaid.**

The cunning of each of them against the other was not great. But Partholón had thus fled from Greece after killing his father and mother, hoping thus to usurp the government from his brother - though he lost his left eye when attacking his parents.

They sailed from the land of Scythia for a year and voyaged until they reached the land of Greece,

thither they sailed westward for one month until they came to Cappadocia,

thence for three days more they sailed until they reached Gothia and from there they sailed another month until they arrived in Spain, from whence they made their way to Ireland and there they landed at

*Inber Scene* (mouth of *Abha na Sionainne*, the River Shannon).

On this day fires were lit for ritual protection;

the people danced in a sunwise direction and carried burning torches around the fields - sympathetic magic at this time of renewed hope and delight at the end of winter.

Among the company that Partholón brought to Ireland were *Dealgnaid*, his wife, his three sons and ten daughters, and their husbands, three Druids,<sup>5</sup> three great champions, seven chief ploughmen, and four oxen.

<sup>3</sup> **Bealtaine**, the beginning of the summer season and the bright half of the year, was celebrated with great bonfires which marked this time of purification and transition, heralding in the season in the hopes of a good harvest later in the year. The fires were accompanied by rituals to protect the people from harm by otherworldly spirits. This celebration was important because it marked the end of winter. Winters were very rough and many died. Those who survived winter's grip celebrated the powers of growth and light because the powers of darkness and death had been defeated. Tradition records how two fires were lit on the Hill of Uisneach and cattle were driven through the flames to ward off evil influences for the coming year and ensure prosperity.

<sup>4</sup> A poetic name for Spain.

<sup>5</sup> Druids played a major role in Celtic religion. The Grolier Encyclopedia of knowledge says that the word "druid" is related to the word "daur" which means "oak." Druids were the "priests" and elders of the clan, and possessed a wide variety of knowledge that they transcribed to memory. It was their job to memorize all the information and history of the tribe and pass it down by word of mouth. Tradition generally placed this responsibility on certain clans or families, and through this method, family and societal histories were kept alive through oral tradition. A Druid's responsibilities and privileges were to serve as an advisor to their kings and chieftains, as judges, teachers, ritual leaders, philosophers, astronomers,

*Dealgnaid* was the mother of Slain, Laighlinne and Rudraidhe - and their wives were Nerba, Cichba, and Cerbnad.

The ten daughters were: Aife, Aine, Adnad, Macha, Mucha, Melepard, Glas, Grenach, Auch, and Achanach. Their husbands were: Aidbli, Bonnad, Ban, Caertin, Echtach, Athchosan, Lucraid, Ligair, Lugaid, and Gerber. The Druids were: Fiss, Eolas, and Eochmarc. The three great champions were: Milchu, Meran, and Muinechan. The seven chief ploughmen were: Totacht, Tarba, Eochar, Aithechbel, Cuaille, Dorchá, and Dam. The four oxen were named: Liac, Leasmag, Imar, and Etrigi... and they first ploughed the soil of Ireland.



*Ainé - goddess of fairies*

Ireland was divided into four parts by Partholón and his sons, and they cleared four plains out of the great forests which grew there:

Magh Itha in Laigen, Magh Tuireadh in Connacht, Magh Li in Ui mac Uais, and Magh Laderand in Dal nAraide.

And in that time seven new lakes burst forth in the land: Lough Laighlinne in Ui mac Uais of Breg, Lough Cuan and Lough Radraige in Ulster, Lough Dechet and Lough Mese and Lough Con in Connaught, and Lough Echtra in Airgalla.<sup>6</sup>

Partholón and his wife, *Dealgnaid* lived on a small island, called *Saimera*, near the head of the estuary on the River Erne.

Once, while Partholón was out touring his domain and hunting, his wife *Dealgnaid* seduced *Togda* (or *Topa*), a slave.

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mathematicians and as authorities in matters of worship and ceremony. The Druids were known to have had a very special relationship with nature.

The Vates also played an important role in the religious aspects of the Celtic tribes. The Vates were the interpreters of sacrifices, divinations and prophecies. They were the shamans responsible for understanding the mysteries of life, death, and rebirth. They also studied herbalism and the healing arts. The Vergobretus, known as Master Druids, were men who administered law cases among the Celts.

The Bards (the first level of training for any of these paths) were the singers and poets of the Celts. The keepers of the oral tradition, they memorized stories, poems, philosophies, histories, *et cetera*.

<sup>6</sup> "The Lebor Feasa Runda: A Druidic Grammar of Celtic Lore and Magic" by Steven A. Akins.

Afterwards, they drank from Partholón's ale, which could only be drunk through a golden tube.

Partholón discovered the affair when he drank his ale and recognized the taste of *Dealgnaid* and *Togda*'s mouths on the golden tube.

He was furious. In anger, he killed *Togda*.

*Dealgnaid* was unrepentant, and insisted that Partholón himself was to blame,

as leaving them alone together was like leaving *choice honey before a woman, or sweet milk before a child, or food near a generous man, or fleshmeat before a cat, or edged tools and instruments before a craftsman, or man and woman in a desert place and expecting them not to take advantage.*

When Partholón heard this impudent retort, he grabbed his wife's hound, *Saimer*, and dashed it against the ground, killing it.

In a trial in which she was charged with adultery, she was acquitted. This is recorded as the first adultery and the first jealousy in Ireland after the Flood.

• • •

At that time there were in Ireland only one treeless and grassless plain, three lakes and nine rivers, but during Partholón's time four plains were cleared and seven new lakes were formed.

Before his time there had been no tilling of the soil.

Seventeen years after Partholón took possession of Ireland, the first of his followers died: *Feda son of Tortan*.

iv

The land held peace and prosperity for Partholón and his people, until, 311 years after the Flood, there was a bloody battle fought in Slemna at *Magh-Itha*<sup>7</sup> - the first battle in Ireland.

The sea-roving Fomhoiréans from Lochlann (Scandinavia),<sup>8</sup> led by *Cichol Gricenches* against the Muintir Partholón (the people of Partholón), wrought war and pillage upon them.

The plain of *Magh-Itha* was tilled by Partholón's hireling *Ith*, and a battle was fought on the *slemna*, or "smooth lands" of that plain.

The battle lasted a week, and no one was killed or wounded as it was fought principally by magic.

Eventually, *Cichol Gricenches* was killed and his whole army were destroyed, and the Fomhoiréans were driven from the land.

After three centuries the population had grown to thousands but on the tercentenary of Partholón's landing God sent a plague - in vengeance of his parricides - on his prosperity; his people were wiped out by the *epidemic*, gathering together to die on *Senmag*, the original plain of Ireland, near modern *Tallaght*.

Nine thousand - five thousand men and four thousand women - of them died in one week at *Benn-Edar* (*the Hill of Howth*).

One man, a reclusive hermit named Tuan *son of Starn son of Sera son of Partholón's brother*, survived through a series of animal transformations.

The knowledge brought and augmented by the Muintir Partholón (the people of Partholón) did not perish, the knowledge of working gold, the first brewing of beer, the first cauldron and the introduction of domesticated cattle.

• • •

For thirty years Tuan abide alone, wandering the isle and living in dead men's houses,

<sup>7</sup> *Magh-Itha* is the name of a plain in the barony of Raphoe, along the River Finn, near Lough Swilly, in the county of Donegal.

<sup>8</sup> *Lochlann* signifies Scandinavia, and more specifically Norway (which was known anciently as *Formoria*). In Irish, the adjective noun "*Lochlanach*" (person belonging to *Lochlann*) has the additional sense of "raider," specifically "Viking."

from hill to hill, from cliff to cliff and in caves and wastes, guarding himself from wolves; during which time Ireland was empty.

He grew long-haired, clawed, decrepit, withered, grey, naked, wretched and miserable - and it was in this state that Tuan survived to see the arrival of Neimheadh *son of Agnoman* (*Tuan's father's brother*) and his followers on the shores of Ireland.

He woke up one day from the spell of *féth fíada* (a magic mist) to find himself reborn as a vigorous young stag, the leader of the herds... and wherever he went there were large herds of stags about him...

he watched the Neimheadhians depart from Ireland; the land was desolate for two hundred years.

In that time Tuan grew from a strong young buck glad of heart into a grizzled old stag - and he found himself stalked by hungry wolves which chased him into a cave

where, weary from the chase, he fell into a slumber and dreamed he had become a fearsome young boar.

He was reborn again as a wild boar, young and glad of mind, and became the king of the boar-herds... witnessing the taking of Ireland by Semion *son of Starath*, leader of the **Fir Bholg** (Belgae) and the **Fir Gaileóin** (Gauls) and the **Fir Domann** (Dumnonii).



Gauls

Then old age came upon him *again* and his mind was sad, and he was unable to do all that he was able to do before, and was alone in dark caves and in hidden cliffs.

Then, returning to the cave, for in the same place he always changed shape, and always visited that place to await renewal, and he remembered every shape in which he had been before, and fasted three days as he had always done, and had no strength left; then he became a great hawk (or eagle) and his mind was happy again, able to do anything.

He was eager and lusty and flew across Ireland and saw Ireland seized *Béothach son of Iarbolon the Soothsayer* and from them are the Tuatha Dé Danaan and Andé, whose origin the learned do not know,

but it seems likely to them that they came from Heaven, on account of their intelligence and excellence of their knowledge.

Then he was for a long time in the shape of a hawk, so that he outlived all those races that invaded Ireland.

However, the Sons of Míl Éspáine took the island by force from the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

Tuan in the shape of a hawk was in the hollow of a tree by a river, and there fasted for three days and three nights, and sleep fell upon him.

Tuan then reincarnated into the shape of a river-salmon and was vigorous and well-fed, and swimming in the river, escaping from every danger and every snare - to wit, from every fisherman and every spear and the talons of every hawk - so that the scars of each one were left on him,

until he was caught by a fisherman serving Cairill, a chieftain of that land,

and was eaten whole by Cairill's wife, who had a desire for fish. He was put on a gridiron and roasted, eaten by her and passed into her womb to be reborn nine months later as Tuan mac Cairill.

## II

### i

Now Neimheadh *son of Agnoman son of Pamp son of Tat son of Sera of Scythia son of Sru son of Esru son of Baath son of Rifath Scot, a descendant of Japheth son of Noah*, commanded a fleet of thirty-four ships with thirty men to each vessel which sailed a year and a half upon the Caspian Sea. And lo! there appeared unto them one day a tower of gold standing on a small island close by in the sea. And the island vanished in the waves each time the tides came in, but reappeared when the water did ebb. Great was the desire of Neimheadh's men to plunder the gold from which the tower was made, and they turned their fleet towards it, perceiving that they might land on the isle where the tower stood when the tides fell low, that they might then take the gold. And so Neimheadh and his men came upon the tower at low tide to make plunder, but of a sudden the tide returned and crashed down upon Neimheadh's fleet, so that every ship sank except for the one which bore Neimheadh and his wife Macha and their four sons: Starn, Iarboneil the Soothsayer, Aininn and Fergus Lethderg the Half-Red - and their wives: Medb, Machu, Yba, and Cera.

After an interval of thirty years the **Muintir Neimheadh** (people of Neimheadh) came into Ireland from *Scythia*.<sup>9</sup> In their time the face of the countryside was again changed by the clearance of twelve new plains and the formation of four new lakes: The twelve new plains were: Magh Cera, Magh Eba, Magh Cuile Tolaid, and Magh Luirg in Connaught; Magh Seired in Tethyba; Magh Tochair in Tir Eogain; Magh Selmne in Dal Araide; Magh Macha in Airgialla; Magh Meath in Brega; Magh Sbernsa in Laighe; Leccmag and Magh Moda in Mumu. The four new lakes were: Lough Cal in Ui Niallain, Lough Munremair in Ui Luigne of Sliab Gnaire, Lough Dairbrech and Lough Annind in Meath.<sup>10</sup>

Macha wife of Neimheadh died twelve days after coming ashore and was buried at *Ard Macha (Armagh)*, one of their two royal fortresses, (the other being situated in *Antrim*). Hers was the first death of the people of Neimheadh.

The Neimheadhians were the first people to build a fire in Ireland, lit by their Chief Druid Mide (Meath), at the Temple Hill of Uisneach<sup>11</sup> [ ] which burned for seven years and lit every chief's hearth in Ireland.

<sup>9</sup> The Scythians were first localized in the Steppe to the north and east of the Black Sea.

<sup>10</sup> "The Lebor Feasa Runda: A Druidic Grammar of Celtic Lore and Magic" by Steven A. Akins.

<sup>11</sup> Uisneach (602 feet) was in Co. Westmeath, 19 kilometers (12 miles) west of Mullingar. As a ceremonial site Uisneach is second only to **Emain Macha**, the "Royal Seat of Ulster," which was the home of the goddess Macha and the Red Branch. Many of the most famous names in Irish mythology are associated with Emain Macha and the Red Branch warriors: Amhairghin the fili; the great warrior Cú Chulainn; Emer, the strong-willed and beautiful bride; Conall Cernach; Lóegaire; Conchobhar mac Nessa, King of Ulster; the chief druid Cathbad; Fergus mac Róith, another great warrior and king; Deirdre of the Sorrows, the most beautiful girl in Ireland, and her lover, Naoise; and Leabharacham, the wise woman.

The Temple Hill of Uisneach, the navel of Ireland, was the traditional center of the four ancient provinces of Ireland: Connaught, Leinster, Ulster and Munster.

It was marked by the great stone of *Ail na Mirenn*, the Stone of Divisions.

From Uisneach, hills and mountains in twenty counties could be easily identified; and beacon fires on their summits could unite the provinces.

### ii

Neimheadh had not remained long in peace in the country before he was disturbed by the incursions of the sea-roving Fomhoiréans; their valiant leader Conaing (Conann) *son of Faebhar* took possession of *Tory Island* (*on the northwest coast of Donegal*), which they fortified and turned into a citadel, making themselves formidable and oppressive to the Neimheadhians on the mainland.

Decimated by the same **epidemic** which had annihilated Partholón they were unable to defend themselves adequately against the Fomhoiréans and became their vassals.

Part of their tribute was the delivery on *the first of November* at the feast of *Samain*<sup>12</sup> of two-thirds of their corn and milk, and two-thirds of the children born to them each year - a hideous and terrifying ritual echoing of human sacrifices to *Crom Crúach*. On the eve of the feast, time appeared to belong neither to the old year or the new year, matched by a similar indistinct boundary between the world of man and that of his gods.

There are references, too, to ordeals by fire and water.

Entering the darkness and insecurity of winter the Celts felt insecure in the face of the hostile supernatural powers.

The Neimheadhians, driven to despair at last, assembled all their force, men and women, from all parts of the country, on the shore opposite *Tory Island*;

The Fomhoiréans, perceiving this, sent their druids, male and female, to confound them with spells, but these were met by the Neimheadhian druids, male and female, under the leadership of *Reilbeó daughter of the king of Greece*, Neimheadh's wife and chief of the druids.

Three times the Neimheadhians engaged in conflict with the **Fomhoiréans** - in the Battle of Badbga Connacht; and in the Battle of MúrBholg in Dal Raida, where fell Starn *son of Neimheadh* at the hands of Conaing *son of Faebhar* in Lethet Lachtmaige in MúrBholg in Dal Raida; and in the Battle of Cnamros in Laigne, where a slaughter of the men of Ireland fell, including [Artoat] *son of Neimheadh* and Beoan *son of Starn son of Neimheadh*, at the hands of the same Conaing.

Neimheadh himself slew Gand and Sengand who were the two great chiefs of the Fomhoiré, which he killed in the Battle of Ros Fraechain in Connacht; a fierce contest of spells and blows ensued between them, which resulted in the utter rout of the Fomhoiréans, and they retreated to **Tuir Chonaind** (Conaing's Tower), their fortress tower on **Tor Innis** (*Tory Island*).

And those battles were broken before Neimheadh.

As tribute, the Fomhoiréans were forced to build two great citadels for Neimheadh, Rath Chimbaith in Semne and Rath Cindeich in Ui Niallain.

The four sons of Mátan Munremar built these two strongholds. The four sons were: Bocc, Robocc, Ruibne, and Rotan.

On the day that this work was completed Neimheadh slew them at Daire Lige - lest they should build similar fortresses for the Fomhoiréans.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> On the eve of *Samain* the people of the side left their domain and wandered in the world of man. Furthermore the beginning of the year was a solemn event, coming as it did at the beginning of winter, to a people whose agricultural economy was still liable to failure.

But lo! a plague fell upon the land and half the people of Neimheadh died;  
Neimheadh himself fell ill and languished from his sickness until he died in a decrepit state,  
and his body was buried at Ui Laithain on the isle which was henceforth called Oilean Arda Neimheadh.

There was [at that time] a great oppression upon the children of Neimheadh at the hands of the Fomhoiré, namely at the hands of Morc [Crom] *son of Deled* and of Conaing *son of Faebhar*, king of the Fomhoiréans. When Conaing heard of the death of Neimheadh and sent forth his army from Tor Innis in a great fleet to lay siege upon the people of Neimheadh, over against Ireland in the north-west, and they fell upon them in vengeance and did take their wrath upon them and, suffering from plague, they were finally defeated in the Battle of Cnáross; and they made a sheepplend of Ireland. And Conaing put Liagh, a woman of his tribe, over the people of Neimheadh to tax them, so that each household was made to pay three full measures of the cream of their milk, of the flour of their wheat, and of their butter, which they were compelled to deliver to Conaing's island fortress, Tuir Chonaind (Conaing's Tower).

And the Fomhoiré compelled the people of Neimheadh to render unto them two thirds of their children and two thirds of their cattle every Samhain at Magh Cetne.

And sorely did the vassal people of Neimheadh suffer by their rule: And the Fomhoiréans made a sheep of the men of Ireland and none would dare to let smoke be seen trailing from their house by day.

Now woe befell the people of Neimheadh and great was their anger and indignation at the Fomhoiréans for the heaviness of the tax. So they sought consul from the wisest man in Ireland, Fionntan mac Bóchra the Wise - the first of all men to come to the island. When the people of Neimheadh told him of their plight, Fionntan mac Bóchra told them that it was in their power to either bear the tribute... or escape it.

But there was among them a quarrelsome few who did more harm to their cause than the Fomhoiréans.

Fionntan mac Bóchra implored the people of Neimheadh to flee Ireland and escape the violence of the Fomhoiréans. But they divided their number, for not all would agree on where to go or which direction to take.

Fionntan mac Bóchra foretold that Béothach *son of Iarboneel the Soothsayer son of Neimheadh and Machu* should journey north to distant lands;

but the children of Semeon should travel east to the land of the Greeks... where their numbers would grow so that their children and grandchildren might return to Ireland some day and settle there once more.

When the people of Neimheadh heard the consul of Fionntan mac Brócrá dissension broke out amongst them, as a faction arose who felt that they should not flee Ireland but rather they should do battle with the Fomhoiréans and take the land by force of arms.

Then Fergus Lethderg the Half-Red [Redside] *son of Neimheadh* together with his nephews Semul *son of Iarboneel the Soothsayer son of Neimheadh* and Erlen *son of Starn* gathered together an army of their people decided not to pay the tax and went forth to wage war against the Fomhoiréans at Tuir Chonaind (Conaing's Tower) on Tor Innis;

whereupon Fergus Lethderg the Half-Red [Redside] slew Conaing (Conann) *son of Faebhar*, the chief leader of the Fomhoiréans, and his sons were vanquished, and they captured the tower.



Dana (Danu)

The Neimheadhians did not long enjoy the peace and freedom which this victory brought them;

for at this time Morc [Crom] *son of Deled*, a great chieftain of the Fomhoiréans, had been away at sea with three-score ships, raiding along the coast of Africa.

But on their return to Tor Innis, Morc [Crom] perceived the slaughter that befell Conaing and his men.

And lo! the people of Neimheadh saw the fleet of Morc [Crom] approaching and they took ships to meet them on the sea and do battle with the Fomhoiréans.

Even as they fought, a great storm arose upon the sea and crashed down upon the people of Neimheadh and sank all their ships save for a single vessel, which bore the last of their men: Erlen, Mathach, Iartacht, Béothach, Briotan Mhaol, Baath, Iobath, Bechach, Beathach, Bronal, Pal, Goirthigorn, German, Glas, Ceran, Gobran, Gothiam, Gam, Dam, Ding, Deal, Semeon Fortecht, Gosten, Grimaig, Guillius, Taman, Turue, Glas, Feb, and Feran.<sup>14</sup>

Of these, Béothach *son of Iarboneel the Soothsayer son of Neimheadh* remained in Ireland together with his ten wives, and they survived him for twenty-three after he died of Plague.

Of his offspring, Iobath along with his son Baath, left Ireland and set off northwards upon a journey to Lochlann (Scandinavia).

The other men divided them into companies and made their departure from Ireland.

Among them, Briotan Mhaol ("the Bald") *son of Fergus Lethderg the Half-Red son of Neimheadh* went forth with his men unto the land of Britain, where they settled and their generations gave rise to the race of Britons.

Máthach, Erlen and Iartach, the three sons of Beoan *son of Starn son of Neimheadh* went forth with others of their company to Dobar and Iardobar in the north of Alba (originally meaning Britain, later Scotland) and from them are descended the race of Cruithne.

Semeon *son of Eglan son of Beoan* journeyed to the land of the Greeks, where they were subjugated and became slaves,

<sup>13</sup> "The Lebor Feasa Runda: A Druidic Grammar of Celtic Lore and Magic" by Steven A. Akins.

<sup>14</sup> "The Lebor Feasa Runda: A Druidic Grammar of Celtic Lore and Magic" by Steven A. Akins.

his generations multiplied until they numbered in the thousands.<sup>15</sup>

Next followed on *the first of August* the **Fir Bholg** (Belgae) together with the **Fir Gaileóin** (Gauls) and **Fir Domnann** (Dumnonii).

They were soon dispossessed by the **Tuatha Dé Danaan**, "the people of the goddess Danu."

### III. The Fir Bholg



i

The **Fir Bholg** are descended from the Muintir Neimheadh (people of Neimheadh), who abandoned Ireland and settled in different parts of Europe.

All but thirty of the people of Neimheadh were wiped out.

Of this thirty, one group fled "into the north of the world," one group fled to Britain and one group fled to Greece.

Those who went into the north became the **Tuatha Dé Danaan** and those who went with Semeon *son of Starn* to Greece became the **Fir Bholg**.

Semeon's issue was enslaved in Thrace by the Greeks and compelled to carry leather bags of clay and earth, hence the name **Fir Bholg** (men of bags),

which they carried from pits they dug with their spears up onto cold rough stretches of rugged, rocky land on the hillsides and mountain slopes,

on inhospitable heights and in deep ravines, on broken land and ground unfit for cultivation,

to make it into fertile fields by dumping great amounts of soil upon it, making it into a smiling clover-covered plains.

But when the chiefs and powerful men of the land saw the smooth, broad and grassy fields, and the wild expanses of fruitful cultivated land,

they would expel the occupants, and give them in exchange other wild, rugged regions, hard, stony lands infested with poisonous serpents.

In the meantime, the children of Neimheadh increased and multiplied.

The tribute became heavier and heavier and their labour harder until they, now a powerful company, could no longer abide the severity of the labour and the heaviness of the bondage imposed upon them by the Greeks,

and in secret they fashioned themselves wide, curved boats made of wicker that they covered with leather from the bags of their burden;

and by this means five thousand endeavoured to escape by night into the harbour where the vessels of the King of the Greeks were docked - and they stole the King's galleys.

After 230 years of slavery and oppression, they left Greece in a great fleet<sup>16</sup> and sailed a year and three days to Iberia, and they asked their druids and seers for information and direction concerning the winds which should carry them from thence, and they sailed thirteen days more until they perceived the shores of Ireland in the distance. As they drew nigh the coast of Ireland a great wind which rose high and strong blew upon the fleet, and the violence drove<sup>3</sup> huge waves against the sides of their ships, and their fleet was scattered, so they did not all make land at the same place.

Five chieftains had they among them which were brothers: Gann. Gannan, Ruaignre the Red, Sengainn of the spears, and Sláinge (Slánga);

these were the sons of Dela *son of Loth son of Oirthet son of Tribaut son of Gothorb son of Gosten son of Fortech son of Semeon son of Erglan son of Beoan son of Starn son of Neimheadh.*

And with them the sons of Dela brought their wives: Etar, the wife of Gann the warrior; Cnucha, the wife of fair Gannan; Liber, the wife of Ruaignre the Red; Anust, the wife of Sengainn; and Fuat, the wife of Sláinge.

ii

Sláinge *son of Dela son of Loth*, of the **Fir Bholg**, a descendant of *Starn son of Neimheadh* and the elder of the company, was judge among his brothers and the legendary first High King of Ireland.

Sláinge came ashore with a thousand men at *Wexford Harbour* in the mouth of *Inber Slaine (River Slaney)* on Lughnasadh - on Saturday, *the first day of August*, at the beginning of the harvest season.

Three days later Gann and Sengainn came ashore together with two thousand men at *Inber Dubglaisi*.

Three days later Ruaignre landed at *Tracht Ruaignre in Ulster* and Gannan made land at *Inber Domnann* - together with two thousand men.

The **Fir Bholg** invaded Ireland with five thousand men... and Sláinge and his four brothers divided Ireland into five provinces:

From *Inber Colptha* to *Comar Tri nUisce* was given to Sláinge, Gann's portion was from *Comar Tri nUisce* to *Belach Conglais*, Sengainn's from *Belach Conglais* to *Limerick*.

Gann took North Munster and Sengainn took South Munster, Genann was put over Connaught, Ruaignre over Ulster and Slánga over Leinster.

The **Fir Bholg** then occupied Ireland - *and were masters of it for thirty years*.

The men of the tribe of Sláinge were called by the name of **Fir Gaileóin** from the javelins with which they used to dig.

Likewise the men of the tribes of Gannan and Ruaignre are known as **Fir Domnann** or men of depths, from the pits they had laboured in.

And the men of the tribes of Gann and Sengainn were called the **Fir Bholg** or men of bags, after the leather sacks they used to carry clay in,

<sup>16</sup> It was at the same time as the children of Israel were leaving Egypt in search of the happy Land Between of Promise, while the descendants of Goidel Glas moved up from the south after the escape of the people of God and the drowning of Pharaoh. Goidel Glas *son of Nel (son of Fénius Farsaid)* and Scota (*daughter of Pharaoh*) is credited with the creation of Gaelic from the original seventy-two languages at the time of "the confusion of tongues." Fénius Farsaid was one of the seventy-two chieftains who built the Tower of Babel.

<sup>15</sup> "The Lebor Feasa Runda: A Druidic Grammar of Celtic Lore and Magic" by Steven A. Akins.

and it is by this name that all are known.

iii

They established the High Kingship - and elected *Sláinge* as ruler over them - and a succession of nine High Kings ruled over Ireland for the next 37 years.

His wife was *Fuad*. His portion of the Fir Bholg were known as the *Gailiön*.

He ruled only one year and died at *Dind Rig* in *County Carlow* and was buried at *Slaine, County Meath*.

He was succeeded by his brother *Ruaighre*.

*Ruaighre mac Dela mac Loth* arrived in Ireland on a Friday with his brother *Genann*, they landed at *Tracht Ruaignre* (*Dundrum Bay, County Down*) which was named *Inber Domnann* after their tribe - *arable farmers from Britain and Gaul who planted crops*.

They were called Fir Domnann because of the furrows they made in the earth.

*Ruaighre* took the province of *Ulster* as his share of Ireland and went there to rule with two thousand in his retinue.

His wife was *Liber*.

After *Sláinge's* death, *Ruaighre* became High King.

After only two years in the kingship, *Ruaighre* died at *Brug Bratruad* (*The Hostel of the Red Cloak*) [at *Brú na Bóinne* (*Palace of the Boyne*) (*Newgrange*)<sup>17</sup>].

*Genann mac Dela*, of the Fir Bholg, was a legendary joint High King of Ireland with his brother *Gann mac Dela*, and they ruled together for four years.

*Genann's* wife was *Cnucha*. *Gann's* wife was *Etar*.

*Genann* landed with his brother *Ruaighre*... and took the province of *Connaught*.

*Gann* landed with *Sengainn* at *Inber Dubglaise* and split *Munster* between them, *Gann* taking the north and *Sengainn* the south of the province.

Both died of plague in *Fremaind*, along with two thousand of their followers, and were succeeded by *Sengainn*.

*Sengainn son of Dela*, of the Fir Bholg, was a legendary High King of Ireland, succeeding his brothers *Genann* and *Gann*.

His wife was *Anust*.

*Sengainn* ruled Ireland for five years, before he was killed by his nephew *Fiacha Cennfinnán* ("*Fiacha of the little white head*") son of *Starn son of Ruaignre*.

*Fiacha Cennfinnán son of Starn son of Ruaignre*, of the Fir Bholg, became High King of Ireland ruled for five years, until he was overthrown by *Rinnal son of Genann*.

*Rinnal son of Genann*, of the Fir Bholg, became High King of Ireland when he overthrew *Fiacha Cennfinnán*.

He is said to be the first king in Ireland to use spearheads.<sup>18</sup>

He ruled for six years before being overthrown by his cousin *Fodbgén*, son of *Sengainn*.

*Fodbgén son of Sengainn the Despoiler*, of the Fir Bholg, ruled for four years before he was overthrown by *Eochaid mac Eirc*, *Rinnal's* grandson.

It is said that before his time there were no knots (Old Irish *odb*) in trees.

*Eochaid mac Eirc (son of Eirc) son of Rinnal*, of the Fir Bholg, ruled for ten years. He was the first High King of Ireland to establish a system of justice in Ireland.

No rain fell during his reign, only dew, and yet there was a harvest every year.

His wife was the goddess *Taitiu* daughter of the king of *Spain*. He named his capital *Teltin* (now *Teltown*, in *County Meath*, between *Navan* and *Kells*) after her.

The last High King of the Fir Bholg, *Eochaid mac Eirc*, is the example of a perfect king.

Tuan son of Starn witnessed their reign over all of the land, for he was then chief of all the boar-herds in Ireland, but after many years in that state weariness and old age fell upon him, so he returned to his cave in Ulster where he fell into a slumber and dreamed that he was a hawk, and when he awakened from the spell of *féth fiada* (a magic mist) he found himself reborn in the shape of a hawk.

Stretching out his wings he took to the sky, soaring on the winds, and with a keen eye he saw the approach of strangers to the shores of Ireland.<sup>19</sup>

iv

After 37 years, the Tuatha Dé Danaan, another group descended from the Muintir Neimheadh, arrived in Ireland in a cloud caused by the burning of their ships.

The two people sent emissaries to meet and talk.

Each looking curiously at the other's strange clothing and weapons:

The spear of the Tuatha Dé Danaan was superbly crafted, whereas the Fir Bholg spear was blunt.

Their king, Núadha, asked that they be given half the island, but the Fir Bholg High King *Eochaid son of Eirc* refused and declared war against the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

The two groups met at the *Pass of Belgatan*, a plain in the north-west of Connacht, and the ensuing battle - the *First Battle of Cét-chath Maighe Tuireadh* - lasted for four days.

The Tuatha Dé Danaan had decided not to flee to their ships if they were defeated.

During the battle, *Sreng son of Sengainn son of Dela*, the champion of the Fir Bholg, challenged Núadha to single combat.

With one sweep of his sword, *Sreng* cut off Núadha's right hand.

However, the Fir Bholg were overthrown by the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

During the fighting *Eochaid son of Eirc* was overcome by thirst, but the druids of the Tuatha Dé Danaan hid all sources of water from him with their magic.

As he searched for water, he was found and slain by the great phantom queen *Morrígan* - on the strand at *Beltra Co, Sligo*.

*Sreng* saved them from utter loss - some the Fir Bholg fled Ireland to the Fomhoiréans, and settled in Arran and in Islay and in Mann and in Rathlin.

The Tuatha Dé Danaan offered those Fir Bholg which remained one quarter of Ireland, and they chose *Connaught*.

The Tuatha Dé Danaan also lost many people in the battle, including: *Edleo mac Allai*, *Ernmas daughter of Etarlam son of Núadha*, her son *Fiacha* and *Tuirill Bicreo (Tuirenn) son of Oghma*; but this last is merely another form of *Tureanu Bicrfnn*.

A stone was erected on the battlefield to mark the place where *Edleo mac Allai* fell - the first of the Tuatha Dé Danaan to die in Ireland.

<sup>17</sup> *Brú na Bóinne* is a World Heritage site in *County Meath*, Ireland, and is the largest and one of the most important complex of Megalithic sites in Europe, dating to the Neolithic period. The complex is situated around a wide bend in the River Boyne. The site predates the Egyptian pyramids and was built with sophistication and a knowledge of science and astrology.

<sup>18</sup> Old Irish *rind*, *rinn*, (spear)-point.

<sup>19</sup> "The Lebor Feasa Runda: A Druidic Grammar of Celtic Lore and Magic" by Steven A. Akins.

Ernmas and Tuirill Bicreo are mother and father or grandmother and grandfather to all of the most important members of the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

Tuirill Bicreo is the father of Brian, Iuchar and Iucharba, whose mother is Tuirill Bicreo's own daughter, the Morrigan.



#### IV. The Tuatha Dé Danaan (The Ancestors of the Modern Gaels)



I

i

The **Tuatha Dé Danaan**, "the people of the goddess Danu," were the last generation of gods to rule Ireland before *the invasion of the Sons of Mil Éspáine, the ancestors of the present-day Irish.*

The violent and misshapened **Fomhoiré** were monstrous and hideous sea demons with one hand, one foot, and one eye; they emerged from the waves to challenge the two rulers of Ireland - the **Fir Bholg**, or "bag men," and the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

Among the Fir Bholg their High King Eochaid *son of Eirc* represented a benevolent father-figure.

The Fir Bholg lived in Ireland just before the arrival of the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

The Tuatha Dé Danaan were younger gods, and they landed at Tracht Mugha in Ulster on Monday *the first day of May*.

Now, on the arrival of the Tuatha Dé Danaan in Ireland, a vision was revealed to Eochaid *son of Eirc* in a dream.

He pondered over it with much anxiety, being filled with wonder perplexity.

He told his wizard, Cesard, that he had seen a vision of a great flock of black birds coming from the depths of the ocean, which brought confusion and fought with the people of Ireland. Cesard prophesied of the coming to Ireland of enemies from distant countries.

The Tuatha Dé Danaan arrived in Ireland and immediately broke and burnt their ships and boats.

Then they proceeded to the Red Hills of Brefne in the east of Connacht, where they halted and encamped.

At last their hearts and minds were filled with contentment - that they had attained the land of their ancestors.

Now it was reported to the Fir Bholg that that company had arrived in Ireland,

and that they were a handsome and delightful company, the fairest of form, the most distinguished in their equipment and apparel, and their skill in music and playing, the most gifted in mind and temperament that had ever came to Ireland.

That company was also the bravest and inspired the most horror and fear and dread, for the Tuatha Dé Danaan excelled all peoples of the world in their proficiency and in every art.

Sreng was sent out to visit them, for he was big and fierce, and bold to spy on the host and interview the strangers, and uncouth and terrifying to behold;

and he took his strong hooked reddish-brown shield, his two thick-shafted javelins, his death-dealing sword, his fine four-cornered helmet and his heavy iron club;

and he went on his way to the Hill of Rain.

ii

#### *The Meeting of Sreng and Bres<sup>20</sup>*

The Tuatha Dé Danaan saw a huge fearsome man approaching them all alone.

Then Bres *son of Elatha*, the half-Fomhoiré god, went out from the camp to inspect him and parley with him.

He carried with him his shield and his sword, and his two great spears.

The two men drew near each other until they were within speaking distance.

Each looked keenly at the other without speaking a word.

Each was astonished at the other's weapons and appearance.

They greeted each other, for they spoke the same language - their origin being the same...

and they recounted their genealogies...

and by their origins they were as brothers, their race and kin being descended from Semeon.

[

]

"Let us make a compact and a covenant," said Bres.

They did so. And each came nigh unto the other, and Bres asked,

"Where did you spend last night, Sreng?"

"At the hallowed heart of Ireland, in the Rath of the kings in Tara, where are the kings and the princes of the Fir Bholg, and Eochaid, High King of Ireland.

And where are you from?"

"From the hill, from the crowded capacious camp yonder on the mountain slope where are the Tuatha Dé Danaan and Núadha, their king, who came from the north of the world in the cloud of a mist and a magic shower to Ireland and the land of the west."

(However, Sreng did not believe that it was thus that they had come.)

<sup>20</sup> "The Encyclopedia of Myth and Legend: A Definitive Sourcebook of Magic, Vision and Lore" by Caitlin Matthews

Bres gave Sreng one of the two spears he had brought with him, and Sreng gave Bres one of the two javelins he had brought with him. "Tell the Fir Bholg," said Bres, "that they must give my people either battle or half of Ireland."

They parted in peace, after making a compact of friendship with each other.



Ambassadors of the Fir Bolg and Tuath Dé meeting before the Battle of Moytura

Sreng went on his way to Tara - and he told his story. "We will not grant them half or Ireland." said the Fir Bholg.

Bres reached his camp... and told of his meeting with Sreng. The Tuatha Dé Danaan said to each other, "Let us not stay here, but go to the west of Ireland, to some strong place, and let us face whomsoever comes."

So the host traveled westward over plains and inlets till they came to Magh Nia and to the end of Black Hill, which is called Sliabh Belgadain - and they made camp.

II

i

### ***The First Battle of Cét-chath Maighe Tuireadh (Moytura)***<sup>21</sup>

It was then that the war goddesses Badb and Mórrighan and Macha went to the Knoll of the Taking of the Hostages, and to the Hill of the Summoning of the Hosts at Tara, and sent forth magic showers of sorcery

and compact clouds of mist  
and a furious rain of fire, with a downpour of red blood from the air upon the warrior's heads  
and they allowed the Fir Bholg neither rest nor stay for three days and nights.

But Fathach, Gnathach, Ingnathach, and Cesard, the sorcerers of the Fir Bholg stayed the sorcery of the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

Thereupon the Fir Bholg gathered, and their armies and hosts came to one point of meeting.

There met the provincial kings of Ireland.

First came Sreng and Serene and Sithbrugh the three sons of Sengainn of the spears, with the people of the provinces of Curói.

There came too Esca, Econn, and Cirb with the hosts of Conchobhar's province;

the four sons of Gann with the hosts of the province of Eochaid *son of Luchta*;

the four sons of Sláinge with the army of the province of Gaileóin; and High King Eochaid mac Eirc with the hosts of Connacht.

The Fir Bholg, numbering eleven battalions, then marched to the entrance of Magh Nia.

The Tuatha Dé Danaan, with seven battalions, took up their position at the western end of the plain.

It was then that Núadha proposed the Tuatha Dé Danaan send the fili (poets) Cairbre, Ai and Edan, as envoys to the Fir Bholg.

So they set out and came to the tent of High King Eochaid mac Eirc [ ] and were presented with gifts.

They requested the dividing of the land, an equitable halving of Ireland. But the Fir Bholg would not grant their request.

"Then," said the fili, "when do you mean to give battle?"

Some delay was called for preparation... so they called for an armistice until equipment was ready and they were prepared for battle.

The fili went back to the Tuatha Dé Danaan and told them their story from beginning to end,

how terms could not be agreed, because the Fir Bholg refused to divide Ireland in two:

The Fir Bholg would not share the land with them, and refused them favour or friendship, so battle could not be avoided.

The news filled the Tuatha Dé Danaan with consternation.

### *Ruad son of Mongarn*<sup>22</sup>

Thereupon Ruad *son of Mongarn* with twenty-seven of the sons of courageous *Mil* sped westward to the end of Magh Nia to offer a hurling contest to the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

An equal number came out to meet them - and the match began.

They dealt many a blow on legs and arms, till their bones were broken and bruised, and fell outstretched upon the turf, and the match ended.

The Cairn of the Match is the name of the cairn where they met, and Glen Cairn Aillem the place where they are buried.

Ruad turned eastward, and told his tale to Eochaid.

Glad of the killing of the Tuatha Dé Danaan young soldiers, Eochaid said unto Fathach, "Go to the west, and ask the nobles of the Tuatha Dé Danaan how the battle is to be fought tomorrow - whether it is to be for one day or for several."

The poet went and put the question to the nobles of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, that is Núadha, Dagda, and Bres.

And they decided to fight with equal numbers on both sides. Fathach went back, and reported to the Fir Bholg the choice of the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

The Fir Bholg were depressed, for they disliked the choice of the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

The Fir Bholg entrenched a great fort. (It was called the Fort of the Packs, from the packs of dogs that preyed on the bodies of the dead after the battle, or the Fort of the Pools, from the pools of gore that surrounded the wounded.)

<sup>21</sup> "The Encyclopedia of Myth and Legend: A Definitive Sourcebook of Magic, Vision and Lore" by Caitlin Matthews

<sup>22</sup> "The Encyclopedia of Myth and Legend: A Definitive Sourcebook of Magic, Vision and Lore" by Caitlin Matthews

And they dug a Well of Healing to heal their warriors from their wounds. This was filled with herbs.

Another entrenched fort was made by the Tuatha Dé Danaan: It was called the Fort of the Onsets, from the onsets directed out of the battle.

When these works had been finished, Cirb said that he would lead the attack with Mongarn and his son Ruad, Laige and his father Senach.

Six weeks of the summer, half the quarter, had gone on the appointed day of battle.

The hosts rose up that day on the first glimmer of sunlight.

## UNFINISHED

and, although they gained the upper hand on the first day of the First Battle of Cét-chath Maighe Tuireadh Cunga (at Cong) in Connacht, the Fir Bholg were soundly defeated.



## UNFINISHED

ii

After some unsuccessful negotiations with the Fir Bholg, the Tuatha Dé Danaan seized control of Ireland from the Fir Bholg at the *First Battle of Cét-chath Maighe Tuireadh (Moytura)*

because of their technologically superior weapons and magic.

Although the great leader of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, *Núadha son of Danu*, lost a hand, the Tuatha Dé Danaan were victorious and allowed the conquered to retain the *Province of Connacht* while they took possession of the rest of the island, building their capital at *Tara*.

Among the Tuatha Dé Danaan were the Dagda, Oghma, Goibhniu and Bres.

Still unconquered the Fomhoiréans disputed the ownership of the land of Ireland but the Tuatha Dé Danaan, recognizing the strength of their ancient powers, attempted an alliance.

## UNFINISHED

Although nearing defeat, Sreng and the three hundred surviving Fir Bholg vowed to fight to the last man.

The Tuatha Dé Danaan invaders, however, considered them so noble that they offered them one-fifth of Ireland.

They agreed and stood down from the conflict.

The Fir Bholg chose Connacht - where men traced their descent from Sreng until the 17th century.

## UNFINISHED

iii



Taitiu - Great One of Earth

### Taitiu

**Taitiu** was the daughter of the King of Magh Mor ("Great Plain"), from the Land of the Dead (Spain), a ruler of the Fir Bholg and wife of *Eochaidh mac Eirc*, the last king of the Fir Bholg. At her husband's death, she married Eochaid Garb mac Dúach, a warrior of the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

Taitiu was said to have cleared *the forest of Brega* so that it became a plain for farming, a task which killed her - she died of exhaustion. The ancient kingdom of *Brega* was bounded in the south by the *River Liffey* and extended northwards across the *Boyne Valley*.

Because Taitiu was the foster-mother of the sun god Lugh, he called an Áenach (national assembly) to honour her. Lugh then declared that the Áenach Tailteann (Assembly of Taitiu) be held in her honour, during the last fortnight of July, culminating with the *festival of Lughnasadh*, or Lammas Eve, which took place on *the first day of August*.

For three days guests sang Guba (mourning chants) after which druids improvised Cépág (songs in memory of the dead). Her mortal remains were then buried underneath a mound on the banks of the *River Blackwater* before it joins the *River Boyne*.<sup>23</sup> The next day the Ollamh ("most great") poets and druids elected an Ollamh Érenn (Chief Ollamh of Ireland), giving out laws to the people and igniting a bonfire.

Next came the *Cuilteach Fuait*, or third great function, the occasion of a national sporting competition, funeral games<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The Neolithic people of the Boyne Valley aligned their monuments to the major solar events, the winter solstice, the equinoxes and the summer solstice. The solar year was further divided to mark the half-way points between the major solar events giving the cross quarter days of Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnasadh and Samhain. In the Celtic era it was the cross quarter festivals which gained prominence.

<sup>24</sup> Not unlike the Olympic Games.

consisting of games of mental and physical ability, accompanied by a large market for traders.

Games included the long jump, high jump, running, hurling, spear throwing, boxing, contests of swordsmanship, archery, wrestling, swimming, and chariot and horse racing.

They also included competitions in strategy, singing, dancing and story-telling, along with crafts competitions for goldsmiths, jewelers, weavers and armourers.

Along with ensuring a meritocracy, the games also featured a mass arranged marriage and winter lodgings, where couples met for the first time and were given up to a year-and-a-day to divorce on the hills of separation.<sup>25</sup>



"The Second Battle of Moytura," Jim Fitzpatrick.

Illustration from "The Silver Arm," pub. by Paper Tiger (1981).

Before the *Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh* the Morrígan was at the home of Indech mac Dé Domann, brother of King Balor of the Evil Eye and Elatha *son of Dalbaeth*, sons of the Fir Bholg god Domnu.

Elatha was the father of Ogma Grianainech (Ogma the Sunburnt), Eochaid Ollathir, called the Great Dagda, a son named Dalbaeth, and Elloth (the father of Manannán mac Lir).

## UNFINISHED

the Morrígan drained Indech mac Dé Domann of his valour and distributed fistfuls of his blood to the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

## UNFINISHED

III

### *The Tyranny of Bres son of Elatha*



*Carman*

Carman was a warrior-woman and sorceress from Athens who tried to invade Ireland in the days of the Tuatha Dé Danaan along with her three sons: Dub ("black"), Dother ("evil") and Dian ("violence").

She used her magic powers to destroy all the fruit of Ireland.

Four of the Tuatha Dé Danaan challenged Carman and her sons: Crinchinbel, Lugh, Bé Chuille and Aoi.

Bé Chuille, foster-mother of the gods, was a good sorceress. She was killed, along with her sister *Dianann*, also a sorceress, by "grey demons of the air."

## UNFINISHED

<sup>25</sup> T. H. Nally, *The Aonac Tailteann and the Tailteann Games, Their History and Ancient Associations*. Jesson Press. ISBN 978-1-4097-8189-9

Núadha was married to **Nemain** (whose name means "dreadful" or "venomous"), a goddess of war.

Along with **Babد**, **Mórrighan** and **Macha**, she formed one of a group of war deities sometimes appearing as beautiful young women and sometimes as crows, screeching over the battlefield.

Núadha was *also known as* Núadha Airgedlàmh ("Núadha of the Silver Hand"), because of a temporary replacement for the hand he lost at the First Battle of Cét-chath Maighe Tuireadh:

The silver replacement was made by **Dian Cécht**, the leech of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, the god of healing; with his daughter Airmid, he had charge of a spring whose waters restored the dying gods to life. Impressed though the Tuatha Dé Danaan were by Dian Cécht's handiwork, Because a king had to be without physical blemish, Núadha no longer felt fit to be war leader and was forced to abdicate in favour of the half-Fomhoiré **Bres**, who had been raised among the Tuatha Dé Danaan, his mother's people, even though his father, King Elatha *son of Delbaeth*, was a Fomhoiré leader.

Bres was made king of Ireland and ruled the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

Unlike the other Fomhoiré, who were hideous and deformed, Elatha was fair and had golden hair; he wore clothes decked with gold and five gold torcs around his neck.

Elatha came over a level sea in a vessel made of silver, met a Tuatha Dé Danaan goddess named Éri on the sea shore and made love with her on the sand.

Before he left he gave her his signet ring.

Bres was born as a result, although Éri was careful to say nothing to her husband about the boy's real father.

The alliance was further strengthened by the dynastic marriage of Bres to **Brigid** daughter of Dagda. She bore him three sons.

Bres compelled her father, Dagda - *one of the chieftains of the Tuatha*, to build him a fort.

Dagda was forced to share his food with an idle blind man named Cridenbel.

When Cridenbel complained to the king that his share of the food was too small, compared to Dagda, the king forced Dagda to give the larger portion to Cridenbel.

Being a large man, Dagda's health deteriorated due to insufficient food. Only the wisdom of Dagda's son **Oenghus Mac in Og** saved Dagda from starving.

One day, Oenghus Mac in Og found Dagda digging trenches around the fort at Rath Bresse while suffering from failing health.

Oenghus Mac in Og advised Dagda to put three gold coins into Cridenbel's larger portion of the meal.

As a result, the blind man died, and Dagda was arrested for poisoning Cridenbel.

Dagda told Bres that he was innocent and had only given the blind man three gold coins.

Bres warned Dagda that he would die if no coins were found in Cridenbel's stomach.

Cridenbel's stomach was cut open... the three gold coins were found and Dagda was acquitted.

Bres had no gift for leadership, his rule became more tyrannical and oppressive, and lacking in the generosity demanded of a king of the Tuatha.

He offered no form of entertainment to his followers and made even the greatest of them toil like common slaves at humiliating labours: He treated Oghma with contempt and made him collect firewood. He also imposed excessive taxes.

Despite the mutilation of his hand, the people wanted Núadha to rule instead.

Goibhniu and his brother Creidhne the goldsmith fashioned a hand made of silver

and Dian Cécht attached this to Núadha's stump with a combination of surgery and magic - putting Núadha's severed hand into a jar of preserving liquid.

Goibhniu, Creidhne and Luchtaine were the sons of Tuireann and Brigid and were known as the *Trí Dé Dána*, the three gods of art, who forged the weapons used by the Tuatha Dé Danaan against the Fomhoiréans.

Creidhne the goldsmith also worked with bronze and brass. Luchtaine was a carpenter or wright.

Eventually Bres lost his eligibility for the kingship having been satirized so successfully by *Cairbre*, the principal fili of the Tuatha; and, so cursed in a magical satire, that boils erupted on his face.

Núadha Airgedlàmh ("of the Silver Hand") was crowned king.

Bres defected to the Fomhoiré during his enforced abdication and mustered an army against his former people - resulting in formal war between the Tuatha Dé Danaan and the Fomhoiréans, a war fought after seven years of preparation with the help of magical weapons.



Dian Cécht - the god of healing

Núadha Airgedlàmh was dissatisfied with the silver hand made by Dian Cécht

and turned to Dian Cécht's son *Miach*, who made him *a new hand of flesh and blood*.

And Dian Cécht slew *Miach* out of jealousy of his medicinal skills.

#### IV

Núadha's restoration as leader caused the *Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh*, or Moytura the Northern.

Bres returned to his mother Éri and asked her who his real father was - and she told him that he was the son of the Fomhoiréan king Elatha.

She gave Bres the signet ring of Elatha and told him to seek out his father.

Bres, his mother Éri and some of their followers then set out for the land of the Fomhoiréans.

Bres went to **Tuir Chonaind** (Conaing's Tower) on **Tor Innis** (*Tory Island*) and sought an audience with the king.

Bres told Elatha that he was his son and revealed the signet ring in order to seek Fomhoiré assistance.

Elatha asked Bres what it was that drove him out of his own country.

The half-Fomhoiré Bres complained to his kinsmen about his treatment, "Nothing drove me out but my own injustice and my own hardness.

I took away their treasures from the people and their jewels and their food itself.

And there were never taxes put upon them before I was king.

And still I am come to look for fighting men that I may take Ireland by force."

Elatha listened and then bade Bres go to the chief king of the Fomhoiréans, **Balor of the Evil Eye**.



Although he was born with two good eyes, one was ruined in an accident; the eye is so hideous that he only opens it in battle so that its venom will slay whoever is unlucky enough to catch glimpse of it

#### Balor of the Evil Eye

Balor of the Evil Eye, god of drought and blight, was the most formidable of the Fomhoiré:

He had one poisonous eye in the middle of his forehead.

His eye wreaked havoc when opened and destroyed whoever he looked upon,

and his eyelid had to be levered up by rope and pulley by four servants.

It was always covered with seven cloaks to keep it cool.

He took the cloaks off one by one.

At the first, ferns began to whither.

At the second, grass began to redder.

At the third, wood and trees began to heat up.

At the fourth, smoke came out of wood and trees.

At the fifth, everything got red hot.

At the sixth...

At the seventh, the whole land caught fire.<sup>26</sup>

Elatha acknowledged his son and promised military support to restore Bres to the throne in Ireland.



*Lugh Samildánach ("the many-skilled")*

The Tuatha Dé Danaan were powerless against the Fomhoiréans. The Fomhoiréans placed Bres on the throne as over-lord and the

Tuatha Dé Danaan suffered from his oppressive rule:

Not only were the Tuatha Dé Danaan forced to pay excessive tribute to the Fomhoiréans, but their scholars, druids and bards were banned from teaching.

The Tuatha Dé Danaan overcame the Fomhoiré at the Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh,

largely because of their superior magic.

It was prophesied that Balor of the Evil Eye would be slain by his own grandson.

To avoid this fate he locked up his only daughter **Ethlenn** in a crystal tower on Tory Island, *off the north-west coast of Ireland*.

One day, Balor stole the magical cow of abundance, Glas Gaibhnenn, from **Goibhniu** the smith god, and took it to his fortress on Tor Innis (Tory Island).

The fabulous cow was all white with green spots and yielded profuse quantities of milk.

However, a certain Cian, *also known as Scal Balb or Ethiend, son of Dian Cécht of the Tuatha Dé Danaan and brother of Goibhniu*, was guarding the cow.

He set out to get it back with the help of Biróg the druidess and the sea god Manannán mac Lir.

Cian gained access to the tower and managed to reach Ethlenn - who he seduced...

Can then, with the help of the sea god Manannán mac Lir, rescued Glas Gaibhnenn.

Ethlenn gave birth to triplets, but Balor gathered them up in a sheet and sent a messenger to drown them in a whirlpool.

The messenger drowned two of the babies, but unwittingly dropped one of them into the harbour, where it was rescued by Biróg.

<sup>26</sup> Ward, Alan. "The Myths of the Gods: Structures in Irish Mythology."

Biróg took the child back to his father, who gave him to his brother Goibhniu - or to the sea god Manannán mac Lir - in fosterage. The unnamed boy grew up into the resplendent sun god **Lugh**, and so fulfilled his destiny by killing Balor at the Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh.

+

When asked by the guard at the gate of *the royal palace of Tara* to state his craft he replied that he was a carpenter. On being told that the Tuatha (under Núadha) already had a carpenter. Lugh, the Ollamh Érenn (master craftsman or doctor of the sciences)m retorted that he was a smith, and learning further that there was also a smith went on to state that he was also a warrior, a harper, a poet, a historian, hero, sorcerer and so forth. All these posts were filled but Lugh demanded that Núadha should be asked whether or not he had in his court any single person who was master of all these skills. There was not and Lugh was admitted to membership of the Tuatha Dé Danaan - eventually becoming their king.

## V

### i

Just before the Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh, **Ruadan**, the son of the goddess **Brigid** and Bres, the half-Fomhoiré ruler of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, was sent to spy on the Tuatha Dé Danaan smith god Goibhniu who was busily making spears. Goibhniu the smith (and brewer of beer) could make a perfect sword or spear with just three blows of his magic hammer. Ruadan seized one of these impressive weapons and thrust it into the god., but Goibhniu merely pulled it out again and drove it into Ruadan, mortally wounding him. When the goddess Brigid came to the battlefield to bewail her son, her weeping was said to be the first keening in Ireland.

Bres was captured and pleaded for his life, promising in return four harvests a year and continual supplies of milk from the Tuatha Dé Danaan's cows.

These offers were rejected, but his life was spared in return for essential advice on the best times to plough, sow and reap.



In Irish mythology Goibhniu (Old Irish, pronounced 'govinju') or Gaibhne (Modern Irish) was the smith of the Tuatha Dé Danann.

Goibhniu presided over an otherworld feast called *Fled Goibnenn*, for which he brewed the ale.

### ii

Despite Balor's wrathful attempts to have the baby killed, Lugh survived to be brought up by Goibhniu - [according to another tradition, he was brought up by **Manannán mac Lir**].



Danaan and Fomorian Battle of Moytura

The lethal eye of Balor killed both Núadha and Nemain before the young and handsome Lugh destroyed it with a sling shot<sup>27</sup> - and so fulfilled his destiny.

Before delivering the decisive blow Lugh Lámfhada, (meaning "long arm" or "long hand," for his skill with a spear and sling), had circled the enemy host on one foot and with one eye closed, a magic circuit that copied the single-leggedness of the Fomhoiré in general - and one-eyed Balor in particular.

Berserker battle-frenzy gripped Lugh in such a way that one eye disappeared into his head while the other expanded into a hideous, paralyzing stare. Balor's own single eyelid had to be raised by four servants, and Lugh sent his shot - or spear crafted by Goibhniu - smashing into the eye the moment it was opened.

Balor's eye was forced back through his head, with the result that its terrible gaze fell upon the Fomhoiré ranks behind.

Balor's deadly eye was still open when he fell to the ground and burned a hole into the earth - *the hole filled with water and became a lake*.<sup>28</sup>

Thus Balor died and the Fomhoiré were scattered.

Lugh then beheaded Balor of the Evil Eye.

Lugh became known as *Lámfhada* ("of the Long Arm").

<sup>27</sup> Lugh was armed with a spear and a sling, weapons more highly specialized than a club which were capable of accurate aim beyond the immediate reach of a man's arm.

<sup>28</sup> The lake is now known as Loch na Súil, or Lake of the Eye, in Co. Sligo.

Through the bravery of Lugh, however, the Fomhoiré were routed and Bres was taken prisoner. In return for his life, Bres promised to instruct the Tuatha Dé Danaan in the arts of planting and sowing crops. Bres, like his wife, the fertility goddess Brigid, was a deity connected with agriculture.

This was the final defeat of the Fomhoiréans at the Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh (Moytura the Northern). The Fomhoiré were thoroughly beaten and were driven from the land for ever.



*Creidhne*

**Creidhne** was the goldsmith of the Tuatha Dé Danaan and the brother of Goibhniu, the smith god, and *Luchtar*, the carpenter. During the Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh, when the Dé Danaan finally defeated the Fomhoiré, the three brothers could be seen on the battlefield making and repairing spears with magical speed. As Goibhniu fashioned a blade with three blows of his hammer, *Luchtar* carved a handle in a flash, and Creidhne crafted rivets that flew into place and bonded at once.

The Tuatha Dé Danaan were said to have learned magic, crafts and knowledge in **four marvelous cities of the north**: Falias, Gorias, Finias and Murias. From these cities the Tuatha Dé Danaan brought to Ireland four talismans: The **Stone of Fál**, which screamed aloud when the lawful king of Ireland placed his foot upon it; the **magical sword of Núadha**, their great war-leader, which was a weapon so powerful that no enemy could escape it and that could only inflict fatal blows, the **spear (or sling shot) of the sun god Lugh**, who as the slayer of **Balor**, was the bringer of victory over the Fomhoiré; and the **cauldron belonging to Dagda**, father of the gods, which was an inexhaustible pot that was capable of satisfying every appetite.

V

**Mac Cecht** was the Irish god of eloquence and the son of **Oghma**. After Núadha had been killed at the Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh, Mac Cecht and his brothers could not decide whether to divide Ireland between them so they consulted a stranger named **Ith**.

Ith was said to have dwelt in a great tower in Spain, from which he was able to see Ireland and so decided to go there. He landed with ninety followers just after the Tuatha Dé Danaan had defeated the Fomhoiré at the Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh. The Tuatha Dé Danaan suspected Ith of harbouring invasion plans and so killed him. When his body was returned to Spain, his sons swore to conquer the island. The leader of this invasion of Ireland, the last to be recorded, was Ith's uncle **Milesius**, sometimes Mfl or Mfile, a Spanish soldier. They arrived on the island on **the first of May**. The murder there of their kinsman Ith caused the Milesians to take revenge by conquering the island. This they achieved by defeating the Tuatha Dé Danaan, the existing rulers. Battle for supremacy of the island was attended by formal and ritual observances, magic powers were used by both sides.



Eriu Celtic (Irish)  
Another of the three Goddesses after which Ireland was named.

Ériu

**Ériu**, or Erinn, was the wife of **Ma Greine**, son of Oghma, and herself one of the Tuatha Dé Danaan. When the Milesians invaded, she and her two sisters **Banba** and **Fotla**, went to greet them. All three asked that the newcomers would name the island after her. **Amhairghin the fili**, druid and advisor to the sons of Milesius, promised that Ireland would be named after Ériu.

The Tuatha Dé Danaan were expelled from the island and survivors retired to the otherworld beneath the soil of Ireland and took possession of the *side*,<sup>29</sup>

natural mounds and tumuli of prehistoric Ireland.

Other gods went under the sea where lay *Tir fo Thuinn*, "the Land under the Waves."

Others voyaged westwards over the sea to *Tír na nÓc*, "the Land of Youth," or *Magh Mell*, "the Field of Happiness" - islands towards the setting sun.

The otherworld of the Celts was a place of supreme happiness where mortal perfection was idealized.

This was a land of magic, ruled over by the dispossessed gods and inhabited by supernatural beings.

The land was rich in food and the delights of nature.

No unpleasantries existed, neither in nature nor in man.

Music, feasting, love-making and, proper to the ideal of warrior-aristocracy, even fighting were unlimited and devoid of any sense of satiety.

All were immortal and if wounds and death resulted from battle, on the following day the wounds were healed and the dead restored to life.

And so it continued into eternity.

In contrast with the delights of *Tír na nÓc*, there was also an otherworld in which fear rather than bliss was predominant.

The domain of giants, such as that of **Ysbaddaden** in the tale of **Culhwch and Olwen**,

or the kingdom of Scathach surrounded by phantoms and horrors.

## V. The Spirit of Ireland

i

The **Spirit of Ireland** was said to have been personified in the most beautiful woman in the land, such as in the case of **Édáin Echraidhe**, daughter of King Ailill mac Máta, the consort of Medbh, Queen of Connacht.

The Spirit of Ireland came to the island in a time before the biblical Flood as the consort-queen of the people led by Cesair, that person being **Banbha**, wife of the Tuatha Dé Danaan king **Mac Cuill**.

Of these people all but one, Fionntan, drowned in the Flood, and Banbha passed into the realms of deification.

Banbha was the incarnation of the Spirit of Ireland that Amhairghin the fili called upon to cause an enchanted wind sent by the Tuatha Dé Danaan against the Sons of Míl Éspáine to drop.

The Spirit of Ireland embodied the very essence of Ireland. It was her right to confer the status of king, who had to ritually mate with her, and hers alone to take it away again. This divine right led to her also being known as the *Sovereignty of Ireland*.

ii

*Banbha, Fóndla and Ériu*

**Banbha** was one of triad of goddesses known collectively as *the Spirit of Ireland*,

her other aspects being **Fóndla** and **Ériu**.

Like the Mórrighan triad, she and her eponymous sisters had bird characteristics and were, when combined in trio, primal figures of sovereignty.

Banbha was the wife of **Mac Cuill** (*son of hazel*), one of the three Tuatha Dé Danaan kings at the time of the invasion by the Sons of Míl Éspáine by whom they were conquered.

His co-rulers at Tara were **Mac Cécht** (*son of the plough*) and **Mac Gréine** (*son of the Sun*). Mac Cécht's wife was Fóndla and Mac Gréine's was the goddess Ériu.



Banbha, Mother of Earth



Fóndla

Third of the trinity of goddesses of Ireland along with Babd and Eriu.

<sup>29</sup> Within a *sid* a whole supernatural world could be encompassed. Time ceased to have terrestrial meaning, a minute in a *sid* might be the equivalent of several mortal years, a period of days in a *sid* might be only as long as a minute in the human world.

The three sisters, with their three husbands, opposed the invasion of Ireland by the Sons of Míl Éspáine with magic. After the invaders had landed and defeated a Tuatha Dé Danaan army, they marched towards *Tara*. *En route* they encountered and wooed Banbha and her sisters, each promising victory to the invaders if the bribe they were offered was sufficient. That offered to Ériu was the best.

Ériu was wooed by Amhairghin the fili, who killed Mac Gréine and promised her that the land would bear her name for all time. In turn, she promised that Ireland would belong to the invading Sons of Míl Éspáine until the end of time. However, she also warned **Dónn**, his name means "Dark" or "Brown One," the churlish king of the Sons of Míl Éspáine, that neither he nor his heirs would enjoy the land. Dónn drowned soon after this encounter and was buried on the island of *Tech Duinn*, off the southwest corner of Ireland, where he became shipwrecked to which he still welcomes dead warriors.

Mac Cuill was killed by **Éber**, one of the leaders of the Sons of Míl Éspáine. Mac Cécht was killed by **Airem**, one of the leaders of the Sons of Míl Éspáine.

Éber's brother was Éber Finn.

#### VI. Cú Chulainn, "the Hound of Culann"



I

Cú Chulainn's mother was **Dechtire** daughter of Maga (*daughter of the love god Oenghus Mac in Og*) and the druid **Cathbhadh**,<sup>30</sup> an advisor to King **Conchobhar mac Nessa**.

<sup>30</sup> Cathbad had three children: Dechtire, mother of Cuchulainn; Elbha, mother of Naoise; and Findchaem, mother of Conall *Cearnach*.

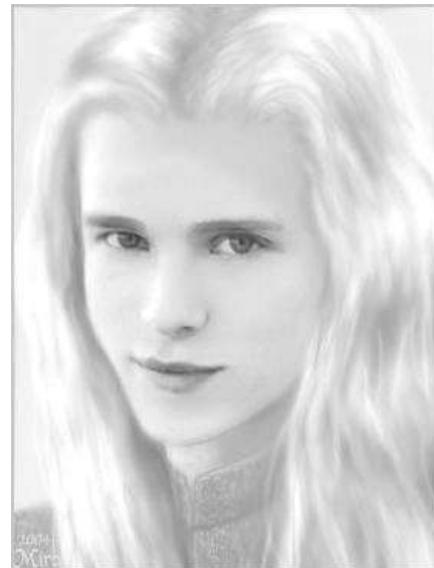
It was Cathbhadh who foretold that Cú Chulainn would become a great hero but die young.

[When King Conchobhar mac Nessa became cruel towards the end of his reign, Cathbhadh cursed the king and his stronghold at Emain Macha.<sup>31</sup>]

Druids were the holy men of the Celts. In them was vested the responsibility for the ritual welfare of the people. They were also judges and teachers.

All ceremonial observances were *naturally* under their control. In them, too, rested the ritual lore of the Celts. This was not written down but had to be learned by rote during the long training of the druid.

The druids taught that their souls did not die but passed at death into other bodies.<sup>32</sup>



Aengus Og - Celtic God of Love, Beauty, and Dreams

Shortly after her marriage to **Sualtam mac Roth**, brother of deposed Ulster ruler **Fergus mac Róith**, Dechtire along with fifty of her kinswomen flew to the otherworld in the form of a flock of birds.

During the wedding feast a fly flew in her cup and she swallowed it. She fell into a deep sleep and dreamed as a result of the shining sun god Lugh, who told her to make this journey.

Cathbhadh reassured his son-in-law by saying that Dechtire had merely gone to visit her otherworld relations, for her mother was a daughter of the god **Oenghus Mac in Og**. In fact, Lugh kept Dechtire there for his own pleasure for three years.

#### *A Gift from the Otherworld*

Three years later, when Dechtire and her women returned to Emain Macha, the stronghold of the Ulster kings, in the form of brightly coloured birds.

The Ulster men went after them with slings, but were unable to hit any of them.

It was decided, therefore, to surprise the birds at night as they rested.

<sup>31</sup> **Emain Macha**, three miles west of Armagh, was a major ceremonial center in prehistoric times, as well as the political and spiritual capital of the area during the Iron Age. It was the capital of the **Ulaidh**, also known as **Clanna Ruaignre**, descendants of Ruaignre, an early people who gave their name to Ulster. It was supposedly founded by the goddess Macha.

<sup>32</sup> Druidical teaching of the after-life led some classical writers to connect it with the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis - teaching that the souls of men are immortal and live again [ ] in another body.

So it was that the warriors came upon Dechtire, her women, and Lugh sleeping in a hut *on a site renown for its magical properties*. When Conchobhar mac Nessa was told of this he sent for Dechtire at once, but she told her captors that she was too ill to be able to travel for another day. Dechtire was expecting Lugh's son: The next morning she showed them to her new-born son, *Séntanta*<sup>33</sup> - a gift to Ulster. Sualtam mac Roth was so pleased to have his wife home again that when the boy was born he accepted him as his own child.

He had seven pupils in each eye, seven fingers on each hand and seven toes on each foot. His cheeks were multicoloured, yellow, blue, green and red. His long dark hair was of three tints, dark close to the roots, red in the middle and lighter in colour towards the tips - *suggestive of the practice of the Celts of smearing their hair with a thick wash of lime*. Rich and gorgeous jewelry adorned him, a hundred strings of jewels on his head, a hundred golden breast ornaments.

In his childhood he bore typical human attributes and was brought up in circumstances appropriate to those of the son of any high-born Celt. Following custom he was sent away to foster-parents, although his education from *Sencha, Fergus* and the druid Cathbhadh who taught him wisdom, warfare and magic, in addition to the normal fosterage given by *Amhairghin* the poet, was to fit him for his special roll in society. As a youth, *Séntanta* quickly learned the ways of the warrior, but it was not obvious to everyone just how strong and brave he was until he killed an enormous hound with his bare hands - at age seven.

#### The Hound of Culann

One day, arriving late at the gate of a house where King Conchobhar mac Nessa was being entertained by the *Ulster* smith *Culann*, who was thought to be a reincarnation of the sea god Manannán mac Lir; the young hero was attacked by the ferocious guard dog and only saved himself by throwing his ball down the animal's gaping throat and, before it could regain its senses, dashing out its brains on one of the gate's pillars. Their host was angry at this because he had now lost a faithful guardian, so *Séntanta* offered to take the enormous hound's place while a replacement was found. When Culann thanked the young warrior but declined his offer, it was decided that henceforth *Séntanta* would be known as Cú Chulainn ("the Hound of Culann").

#### II

Even though Cathbhadh warned that anyone going to battle for the first time on a certain day was destined for a short life, Cú Chulainn could not wait to deal with Ulster's enemies and he took up arms against three semi-divine warriors named *Foill, Fannell, and Tuachell*, as well as their numerous followers, all of whom he killed. In this combat Cú Chulainn displayed for the first time the dreadful shape of his *battle-frenzy*. His body trembled violently, seized by contortions; he turned round in his skin so that his feet and knees were to the rear and calves and buttocks to the front.

One eye receded into his head, the other stood out huge and red on his cheek; a man's head could fit into his jaw; his long hair bristled like hawthorn, and stood on end with a drop of blood or spark of fire at the end of each single hair; from his open mouth spurted fire; and from the top of his head arose a thick column of dark blood *like the mast of a ship*. Finally, on his forehead appeared the "hero's moon," a strange inexplicable sign. When in this state Cú Chulainn's fury was uncontrollable. Thus endowed he was well-nigh invincible in battle and was able to defend Ulster single-handed against the four provinces of Ireland during the time when the men of Ulster were laid prostrate with *the curse of Macha*..



Returning to Emain Macha in his chariot, "graced with the bleeding heads of his enemies," and with the battle-frenzy still upon him, Cú Chulainn was only stopped from circling the defenses and screaming for a fight through a ploy by the Ulster queen *Mughain*. She led out of Emain Macha some hundred and fifty stark naked maidens carrying three tubs of icy cold water. Cú Chulainn, embarrassed or amazed, swiftly averted his eyes and was seized by the king's warriors, who dunked him in the tubs of icy cold water to cool him down. The first one burst its sides. The second boiled furiously, but the last vat became only very hot. Thus was the young hero tamed after his first taste of blood. The queen then dressed the hero herself before admitting him to the royal court.

#### III

In his calm, everyday state of mind Cú Chulainn was a favorite of womenfolk.

<sup>33</sup> *Séntanta* is connected with the British tribe, the Setanti, whose tribal hero he may have been.

But, when he was at the court of the High King of Ireland at Tara, he fell in love with **Emer** daughter of *Fogall*, a wily chieftain whose castle [at Meath] was close to Dublin.

She appeared "dark-haired almost as himself, and her skin white as mare's milk, and her eyes wide and proud and brilliant like the eyes of Fedelma, his favourite falcon."

She was blessed with the six gifts of womanhood: beauty, chastity, wisdom, sweet speech, song and needlecraft.

When Cú Chulainn courted her, she smiled at his youth, and said that he had "deeds to do."

Cú Chulainn asked for Emer's hand but *Fogall*, who was against the match, pointed out that Cú Chulainn had yet to establish his reputation as a warrior

and suggested that he should go and learn from the Scottish champion *Domhall*.

*Domhall* told Cú Chulainn that his best trainer in arms would be the sorceress **Scáthach** (whose name means "shadowy"),

a warrior princess in the **Land of Shadows** and tutor in the martial arts.

So he traveled to this mysterious land and served Scáthach.

She taught the young hero his famous battle leap and gave him the spear named *Gae-Bholt* ("Belly-spear"):

Although it made a single wound on entry, once inside the body of one of Cú Chulainn's enemies, thirty barbs opened to tear the stomach apart.

For a year and a day Cú Chulainn was taught by the female warrior Scáthach,

and became the lover of her daughter **Uathach**.



Scáthach



Uathach

When Uathach served the hero food, he forgot his own strength and accidentally broke her finger while taking a dish from her hand. Her scream brought her previous lover to Uathach's immediate aid, but Cú Chulainn easily slew him in the fight that followed, and afterwards Uathach transferred her affection to the victor.

*Scáthach* feared for the safety of Cú Chulainn and she warned him without success not to challenge her sister **Aife**. Uathach was unhappy that he wanted to fight her sister: But Cú Chulainn beat *Aife* by cunning, and afterwards she became his mistress, conceiving the unfortunate **Conall**.

Cú Chulainn finally returned to *Fogall*'s stronghold and claimed his bride, *Emer*, but only after a heated battle with the reluctant *Fogall* and his warriors, during which *Fogall* leapt to his death escaping the hero. Although *Emer* was totally enraptured by her handsome husband, their marriage was not without its troubles,

not least because many other women also found the Ulster hero attractive.



**Aife** (proto-Celtic) an Amazonian chieftainess, 'the hardest woman warrior in the world,' who lived in Alba [Scotland]

#### *Deborgaille*

**Deborgaille** was the daughter of the ruler of Lochlann (Scandinavia).

When her father left her on the shore as tribute for the Fomhoiré, she was rescued by the Ulster hero Cú Chulainn and fell in love with him.

In order to follow him, she turned herself into a swan. However, unaware of the bird's true identity, Cú Chulainn brought her down with a sling-shot. She returned to human form and he sucked the stone out of the wound, but now they were linked by blood and so he could not marry her.

#### IV

i

**Briciu** was a trouble-maker.

An *Ulster* lord, he arranged a great feast to which he invited all the *Ulster* heroes, and ordered that the hero's portion be given to the greatest of them. At which point the three great warriors, Cú Chulainn, *Laoghaire* and **Conall**, Cú Chulainn's foster-brother, sprang up at once and began fighting each other for the honour. In order to settle the argument it was agreed that a monster should be summoned to test the courage of the three heroes.

**Uath** ("Horror") was the name of a water demon who challenged the three Irish heroes to **a beheading contest**.

Each was invited to take an axe and chop off the giant's head, provided he would then, on the next day, lay his own head on the chopping block for the demon to decapitate.

Only Cú Chulainn rose to the challenge and beheaded the monster, whereupon the creature rose, took up its head and departed.

The next day Cú Chulainn offered his own head and was proclaimed by the monster as the bravest man in Ireland.

After the announcement Uath revealed himself to be **Cú Roi** (whose name means "hound of Roi"), the *Munster* king.

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Later, Cú Roi and Cú Chulainn carried off **Blathnat**, a beautiful woman.

Although she expressed her love for Cú Chulainn, Cú Roi took her to his castle in *Munster*.

When Cú Chulainn laid siege to the impenetrable stronghold, Blathnat betrayed Cú Roi's people by showing how the place could be entered.

A stream flowed through the fort and when Blathnat poured milk into the water, Cú Chulainn was able to follow its course.

In the fierce battle that followed Cú Roi was killed and Cú Chulainn was able to ride off with Blathnat.

He also took with him Cú Roi's bard, *Fer Cherdne*.

When the party halted on a cliff top, however, *Fer Cherdne* took the opportunity to avenge his former master's death by grabbing hold of Blathnat and jumping over the edge with her in his arms.

*ii*

Acclaimed as the champion of Ireland in the beheading contest, Cú Chulainn soon became unbeatable in combat, a skill he was to need dearly in his last campaign, which was a single-handed defense of Ulster against the invading army of **Queen Medbh of Connacht**.



Queen Medbh

### *Ferdiadd*

**Ferdiadd**, son of *Daman* the Fir Bholg, was a member of the Red Branch and a friend and foster-brother of Cú Chulainn. As a young man they were both taught to fight by Scathach.

Ferdiadd was a terrible, yellow-haired monstrous hero... His magical armour is well described.

First, there was a kilt of striped silk with a border of spangled gold. Over this went an apron of brown leather to protect the lower, more delicate, parts of his body.

For added protection he also hung a large stone overt the apron. Finally, his lower half was protected by a further apron, this time made of purified iron.

Ferdiadd thought this would protect him from the Gae Bholga - the terrible, inescapable spear of Cú Chulainn.

On his head he wore a huge, crested battle helmet, each quarter embellished with a flashing gem, its entire surface encrusted with crystals and rubies.

He hung his curved battle sword, with a golden hilt and a red pomme of pure gold, on his left side, and slung a huge shield upon his back, the shield consisting of fifty bosses, each of which would bear the weight of a full grown boar, with a central boss of red gold.

Finally, he took his sharp pointed spear in his right hand.

During the war of the brown bull of Cuailngé, Ferdia fought on the side of Queen Medbh and against Cú Chulainn and the men of *Ulster*.

Ferdia did his best to avoid coming up against his friend, but eventually Medbh taunted him into fighting the great hero in single combat.

He stepped out to meet Cú Chulainn.

The battle raged long and hard.

The first day neither could inflict even a single wound.

The second day each fared a bit better, but not much.

The third day both warriors received horrible wounds, cutting away huge chunks of each other's flesh.

The fourth day saw Cú Chulainn call for his invincible spear, the Gae Bholga,

and, although he had been terribly wounded himself, let fly with the Gae Bholga, which easily penetrated the armour of Ferdiadd who died in his arms. At Ferdia's death, Cú Chulainn fell exhausted, lamenting, "Why should I rise now? he that lies here has fallen by my hand."



"Cú Chulainn carries his foster brother Ferdiad across the river." illustration by E. Wallcousins from Charles Squire's Celtic Myths and Legends 1905

*iii*

The main reason for this large-scale *cattle raid* was a famous brown bull kept in Cuailnge. But the tyrannical ruler of Ulster, King Conchobhar mac Nessa, also played a part in gathering rebellious Ulstermen and others from many parts of Ireland to Queen Medbh's side. One prophecy told the queen that there would be "crimson and red" upon her forces because of Cú Chulainn's prowess, but she was determined to invade and she also had three advantages. First, the great hero had made bitter enemies of the **Calatin** family, whose daughters were witches. Just prior to his last stand along with his faithful charioteer **Laeg**,<sup>34</sup> they cast a spell on Cú Chulainn which withered his shoulder and a hand. (Although invincible he was not invulnerable and his body was sorely wounded on a number of occasions.) To the Celts their hero had to suffer as a mortal else he would have been lessened in their eyes. Second, Medbh attacked when Ulster's heroes were laid low by **Macha's curse**, and were unable to fight for five days and nights. Finally, Cú Chulainn had lost the support of the goddess **Mórrighan** because he rejected her passionate advances; but in anger he had even wounded her: For such a deed his fate was sealed. Yet he still managed to conduct a successful single-handed defense and was able to slow the advance of Queen Medbh's forces by the use of clever tactics and lightning attacks, and the effects of Macha's curse had almost worn off, and the dazed warriors were able to respond to Sualtam mac Roth's call to arms.

+

The Celts were renown in the ancient world for their skill in handling chariots on the battlefield, and Laeg's skill was crucial to many of Cú Chulainn's victories. He was also a great friend and companion.

+



Fand and the Land of Promise

**Fand** was the wife of **Manannán mac Lir**, a sea god, magician and healer, and the ruler of the **Land of Promise**, where he lived in *Emhain ("of the Apple Trees")*. One day she quarreled with her husband and he left her. When she was attacked by the **Fomhoiré**, Fand invited Cú Chulainn to the **Land of Promise**. He sent his charioteer Laeg before him to survey the place. Cú Chulainn came to her island and defeated her enemies, and remained for one month as her lover. Before he returned home, they arranged to meet again in Ireland. But Cú Chulainn's wife, Emer, found out about this secret meeting and took fifty of her maidens armed with sharp knives to kill Fand. A confused argument then took place between Fand, Emer, Cú Chulainn and Manannán mac Lir, who had also learned of the arrangement. But in the end Fand decided to stay with her husband and forgot Cú Chulainn. Manannán mac Lir then shook his magic cloak between Fand and Cú Chulainn so they would never see each other again, and druids gave Cú Chulainn and Emer drinks of forgetfulness.

#### iv

Emer tried to persuade Cú Chulainn to remain in the fortress of Emain Macha, the seat of King Conchobhar mac Nessa; however, he got on his chariot when it was brought around to the front of his house.

Even then he thought of Emer's request, but his enemies **the witches of Calatin** cast a spell to harden his resolve to fight single-handed.

Sualtam mac Roth attempted to gather the men of Ulster who had been weakened by Macha's curse. But their help came to late for Cú Chulainn. So desperately did Sualtam mac Roth turn his horse that he cut off his own head with the sharp edge of his shield. The cries of the severed head rallied the Ulstermen to battle, even after his death, and broke the spell and roused the men to fight.



Cú Chulainn rebuked by Emer

<sup>34</sup> Id. Laeg's brother, was charioteer to Conall *Caernach*.

Exhausted by continual combat, suffering from a chronic lack of sleep, snatching cat-naps between duels:  
Once, his divine father the sun god Lugh, pitying him, cast the hero in a magical sleep for three days and nights, during which he healed all his wounds.  
Pressed on all sides by his enemies, the Ulster champion was overcome  
in spite of the aid from his father, Lugh.  
During Cú Chulainn's final and mortal combat, his only companion, Laeg, threw himself in front of a spear aimed at his master and was laid low,  
then Cú Chulainn himself suffered a terrible stomach wound that even Lugh could not heal.  
Finally, Cú Chulainn tied himself to an upright stone in order to fight till his last breath.  
As soon as he died, Mórrighan, in the form of a crow, settled on his shoulder  
and his enemies cut off his head and his right hand, leaving his body for the carrion birds.  
Conall, his foster brother, managed to recover the missing parts, but Ulster wept for the loss of their champion.



Manannán shakes his cloak between Cú Chulainn and Fand, ensuring the two will never meet again.

### *The Witches of Calatin*

Calatin was a misshapen druid of Fomhoiré origin who was said to have studied sorcery for seventeen years. Queen Medbh of Connacht dispatched Calatin along with his numerous sons to fight the Ulster hero Cú Chulainn. All of them had their left hands and right feet missing, but they never missed with their poisoned spears, and Cú Chulainn only succeeded in beating them with the assistance of a Connacht warrior who disapproved of such a one-sided contest. The destruction of the Calatin males did not spell the end of Cú Chulainn's troubles, however,

for not long afterwards *Calatin's wife* gave birth to three daughters, who were blinded in one eye - so as to learn their magic arts. Soon the three Calatin sisters became powerful witches, and they deceived Cú Chulainn with their spells, and so assisted Queen Medbh's invasion of Ulster. When Cú Chulainn rode out in his chariot against the invaders, he came across the hideous women cooking a dog next to the road. It was his *geasa*<sup>35</sup> not to pass a hearth without tasting the food that was being prepared but it was another *geis* for him to eat dog... and, either because the dog was his namesake, or because it would have been discourteous to refuse a piece of the cooked meat, Cú Chulainn stopped and took hold of the dog's shoulder offered to him. As a result, his own hand and shoulder withered. Gravely weakened, he still advanced with his faithful charioteer Laeg.

iv

### *The Death of Cú Chulainn*

Another series of demands were made upon Cú Chulainn by a poet who threatened to satirize him if he refused. This succeeded in disarming and mortally wounding him. Washing himself in a lake he killed an otter which came to drink the bloodstained water. He realized that his end was near as it had been foretold that his first and last exploits would be the killing of a dog - the first was the hound of Culann and the last a water-dog, the otter. In his death agony he bound himself to a pillar-stone and defied his enemies until the end. And so he died with his honour unimpaired.

### VII. Conchobhar mac Nessa, High King of Ireland



<sup>35</sup> In Irish mythology there is the frequent occurrence of the *geis* which was a ritual injunction to avoid certain actions in some circumstances and to perform others in the appropriate circumstances.

## I

Ulster king **Conchobhar mac Nessa** was the son of *King Fachtna Fáthach of Ulster* and **Nessa**, a local beauty who conceived Conchobhar on the eve of her royal marriage through a secret affair with a druid. When her husband died shortly after the wedding, Nessa was courted by his half-brother and successor **Fergus mac Róith**. But she would only agree to become his wife on the condition that he would first let her son Conchobhar rule as king of Ulster for a year. An ambitious and determined woman, Nessa instructed her son how to be a great ruler so that when the time arrived for Fergus mac Róith to return to the throne, the people of Ulster simply refused to let the popular Conchobhar step down. At first Fergus accepted this but, later, when Conchobhar lost the support of several leading Ulstermen, he led them in revolt. *Conchobhar's love of Derdriu was the cause of his unpopularity.*

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The unborn Derdriu cried out from her mother's womb and the druid **Cathbhadh** then foretold that the child though Derdriu would be the most beautiful woman in Ireland and would marry the king, she would be the cause of doom and destruction throughout the land of Ulster. At her birth, and remembering the prophecy, many wanted to have her killed, but Conchobhar mac Nessa decreed that she should live and that he would marry her when she came of age. Although he was married, King Conchobhar fell deeply in love with Derdriu.

By the time Derdriu grew up, Conchobhar was an old man, and she in disgust refused his advances.



Derdriu and the Sons of Uisliu

## II



"Deirdre of the Sorrows" by Jim Fitzpatrick

*Derdriu "of the Sorrows"*

## i

One day when Conchobhar mac Nessa and some fellow *Ulstermen* were drinking at the house of an Ulster chieftain, **Fedlimid**, the fili (bard) of Conchobhar mac Nessa and the father of Derdriu ("of the Sorrows").

Derdriu was raised in the strictest seclusion by the wise woman Lebhorcam. One day, while she watched her foster-father flay a newly killed calf in the snow, she saw a raven land and drink the blood. Remarking that she would love a man whose hair was as black as the raven, whose blood was as red as that of the calf and whose skin was as white as the snow, she learnt from Lebhorcam that just such a handsome young warrior was **Naoise**, one of the three brothers who were collectively known as the sons of Uisneach. Immediately Derdriu contrived a plan that would allow her to meet him, which she did as he rode through the woods - and left him in no doubt that she found him attractive.

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Lebhorcam was said to cross all Ireland every day.

## ii

By the time Derdriu grew up, Conchobhar was an old man, and she in disgust refused his advances.

Naoise was everything Derdriu had hoped for, but he, remembering the prophecy of Cathbhadh that she would cause untold suffering and knowing of her betrothal from birth [to Conchobhar mac Nessa], was reluctant to respond, even though he Derdriu exceptionally beautiful. She countered by saying that if he did not become her lover she would make him a laughing stock. To preserve his honour, Naoise fled to *Alba* (originally meaning *Britain*, later *Scotland*) with Derdriu and his two brothers, Ardán and Ainnle, all of whom had once held positions of importance and favour at the court of Conchobhar mac Nessa.. By *Loch Ness*, they found refuge and hunted deer and salmon, living in pastoral bliss. But the king never gave up his passion. He was furious,

and it was some time later before the men of *Ulster* managed to persuade him to call a truce and ask the four fugitives to return home.

Finally, Conchobhar mac Nessa sent **Fergus mac Róith**, Dubthach and Dubthach's son, Cormac mac Dubthach, as emissaries to ask them to return home and to guarantee their safety.

After living for many years in their voluntary exile:  
Suspicious of Conchobhar, but trusting Fergus' promise that no harm would come to them,  
Naoise agreed - and he, Derdriu and his brothers were *readily* tricked into returning to *Ulster*.  
The four traveled back to Ireland with the three messengers, but, once they had arrived at Emhain Mhacha, Conchobhar mac Nessa reneged and had the three young men killed by Eoghan mac Durthacht and his men  
and married Derdriu.  
The three heroes, Fergus mac Róith, Dubthach and Cormac mac Dubthach were so appalled by the deceit that they stormed and razed Emhain Mhacha, the chief court of *Ulster*, killed 300 of the men of *Ulster*, and defected to Ailill mac Máta and Medbh of *Connacht*, the great enemies of Conchobhar mac Nessa.

iii

Once married, however, Derdriu remained sad and kept her distance from the king.  
For a whole year she pined, never once lifting her head.  
Finally, Conchobhar mac Nessa asked her what she disliked most in the world.  
She replied that it was Conchobhar mac Nessa himself, with Eoghan mac Durthacht a close second.  
Conchobhar mac Nessa decreed that, since she had spent a year with him, she would spend the next year with Eoghan mac Durthacht, the killer of Naoise.  
She found her situation so intolerable that the very next day, as she was traveling to Eoghan mac Durthacht, she committed suicide by throwing herself from the speeding chariot... and dashing her brains out on a rock.  
From each of the graves of Naoise and Derdriu grew a pine, which eventually intertwined and grew as a single tree.

#### *The "Brain Ball" and the death of Conchobhar mac Nessa*

Fergus mac Róith, appalled by Conchobhar's behaviour, offered his services to Ulster's enemies and a long war ensued.

Conchobhar was himself killed by a magic slingshot. It was the famous "brain ball" made by Conall out of the brains of a slain *Leinster* king.

The ball lodged in the king's skull, and his doctors advised him to avoid any strenuous exercise and excitement.

Some years later Conchobhar mac Nessa got into a rage and the "brain ball" caused his death.

### VIII. Queen Medbh of Connacht and the death of Cú Chulainn

I

**Queen Medbh**, also known as Maeve, the magnificent and malevolent warrior-queen of Connacht, fought as fiercely as **Mórrighan**;

along with her consort **Ailill mac Máta**, she was the enemy of **Conchobhar mac Nessa**.

Her name means "intoxication," and she was, as the most beautiful woman in the land, the personification of the *Spirit of Ireland*.

the goddess whom any king must ritually marry before his office was recognized.

She was said to have been the wife of nine Irish kings and that only her mate could be called the true King of Ireland.

A wild and willful woman, she precipitated and perpetuated bloody war with Ulster, her traditional enemy, in which *Cú Chulainn and other heroes lost their lives*.

Ailill mac Máta was the king of *Connacht* and husband of the warrior-queen Medbh.

He had a rather weak character and was entirely under the influence of Medbh.

According to tradition, no king could reign in *Connacht* unless he was married to Medbh, who held the kingdom's sovereignty in her person. She was "never without one man in the shadow of another."

It was due to her taunting that Ailill mac Máta agreed to go to war with *Ulster*.

Medbh's most famous action was when her forces captured **Donn Cuailngè**, the great brown bull of *Cuailngè*...

because the bull was owned by a man of *Ulster*, her traditional enemy, Medbh had to go to war with that county in order to achieve her desire.

At that time, however, the men of *Ulster* had been cursed by **Macha** and were unfit for battle.

The only *Ulster* warrior not afflicted was Cú Chulainn, still only a youth, and he held off the forces of Medbh and Ailill mac Máta with ruthless efficiency.

Queen Medbh had trained sorcerers from childhood as part of her plan to bring about Cú Chulainn's downfall.

Ulster was invaded by the four provinces (*of Ireland*) and Cú Chulainn hastened to its defense.

This time he realized that he was fighting against supernatural powers, which had been carefully organized against him.

During the "Great Carnage of Mag Muirthemne," Cú Chulainn was "overtaken" by his *geasa*.



Mórrighan

Medbh killed the Ulster hero Cú Chulainn after he had failed to recognize the presence of Mórrighan.

Cú Chulainn had to die without descendants yet die unconquered, and this was brought about by supernatural means against which he was powerless.

The Donn Cuailngé was finally captured, but it destroyed *Finnbhennach*, "The White Horned," a bull owned by Ailill mac Máta, although it had been calved among the herds of Medbh. *Finnbhennach* was the adversary of the Donn Cuailngé. The two bulls fought for a day and a night, a fight so fierce that it shook the mountains. The following morning the Donn Cuailngé trotted back into the camp of Medbh and Ailill mac Marta with all that remained of *Finnbhennach* hanging from his horns.

## II

**Fergus mac Róith** with three hundred Ulster warriors joined Queen Medbh in her invasion of Ulster. When Queen Medbh invaded Ulster, Cú Chulainn faced her army single-handed, but he was doomed because he had offended the war goddess Mórrighan. The great **Cú Chulainn** lost his life in this war, but not at the hands of Fergus. They had been friends before the war and had sworn not to fight each other. During the final battle, Fergus pretended to retreat and the next time they met Cú Chulainn would do the same. It was due to Fergus' retreat that **Conall** was able to defeat Medbh's army and rally the Ulstermen after *the death of Cú Chulainn*.



The Death of Cú Chulainn

As children Cú Chulainn and Conall swore that if either was killed first the other would avenge him.

After Cú Chulainn had been killed, and his head and sword-hand cut off by the enemy, the warriors of Ulster were stirred by Conall to wreak bloody revenge.

They caught up with Queen Medbh's army and Ailill mac Máta finally met his death at the hands of Conall, who killed him in revenge for the death of his foster-brother Fergus mac Róith. Later, Conall went on to ravage the whole of Ireland as he punished Queen Medbh's allies one by one. In doing so he earned his title, *Caernach ("of the Victories")*.

## III

### *The Death of Queen Medbh*

Queen Medbh was slain by *Forbait* son of King *Conchobhar mac Nessa* while she was bathing in a pool.

*Forbait* had discovered that Queen Medbh was in the habit of regularly taking her bath in a Galway pool.

He very carefully measured the exact distance between the spot where she bathed and the shore, then he returned to the Ulster stronghold of Emain Macha and practiced with a sling-shot until he was able to knock an apple from the top of a pole over the same distance.

Satisfied at last that his aim was perfect, he stealthily made his way back to the pool and hit Queen Medbh in the center of her forehead using his sling-shot.

Thus was Ulster revenged.

## IX. Dagda

### I



Mórrighan

i

**Dagda** was known by his epithets, *Eochaid Ollathair* "father of all," and *Ruad Ro-fhessa* "lord of perfect knowledge."

Dagda "the good god" was ugly, pot-bellied and coarse, dressed in the short rustic tunic and hood of the peasant with sandals.

Among his attributes was *an enormous club*, so large that it needed eight men to carry it, and was mounted on wheels.

When dragged along the ground it left a furrow like a frontier dyke. With one end of this weapon he could slay his enemies nine men at a time

and with the other he could restore the dead to life.

He was therefore the lord of life and death.

Dagda was wise and full of knowledge and versed in the magic arts.

He was the chief of the Tuatha Dé Danaan - an ideal leader.

He was a skilled builder and constructed fortresses.

As a harpist he was able to call into existence the seasons of the year, indicative of his guardianship of the fertility of the earth.

Dagda was a great fighter and the lover of **Mórrighan**, the war goddess, whom he met by the River Unius in Connacht on *the first of November*.

[And with **Boann**, the patron goddess of the River Boyne, *also on the first of November*.]

*ii*



### **Boann**

A river Goddess whose magical symbol is that of the silver salmon.

Boann traveled to stay with her brother Elcmar, a vassal of the Dagda, with whom she sought an affair, but Elcmar discovered this and swore never to stay away long enough to give them time to consummate their lust for each other. The Dagda easily circumvented this by causing the sun to stay still for nine months, and so Elcmar did not know he had been away for that long. On his return he realized that something had been going on because of the changes he saw in the flowers and trees. Shortly before Elcmar's return, Boann had given birth to a boy - Oenghus Mac in Og - whom she left outside the sídh of Midhir, who took the infant in and fostered him as his own, although later he told the boy of his parentage and subsequently returned the youth to his natural mother.

Oenghus Mac in Og expelled Elcmar from his sídh, Brugh na Bóinne, which then passed into his ownership.

*iii*

The bones of his enemies were as "hailstones under horses' hooves" when he wielded his mighty club.

Dagda led the Tuatha Dé Danaan on the battlefield, slaying all those who dared to confront him.

Yet he was also associated with abundance, being able to satisfy the hunger of everybody by means of *an inexhaustible cauldron* from which no one ever went away unsatisfied.

Dagda took great pleasure in eating just before the Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh he visited the camp of the Fomhoiré, his bitter enemies,

during a truce at the time of *the New Year festival*.

There they made for him a porridge of milk, flour, fat, pigs and goats - enough for fifty men - which bubbled out of a huge hole in the ground.

On pain of death, Dagda was ordered by the Fomhoiré to consume the massive meal, which he readily did with a huge wooden ladle "so big that a man and a woman could have slept together in it."

This test temporarily turned Dagda into a gross old man, but it did not prevent him from making love to *a Fomhoiré girl*, who promised to use her magic on behalf of the Tuatha Dé Danaan. It was *a holy marriage* between the chieftain and a maiden at the beginning of the year.

The union was meant to ensure prosperity, strength and peace.

### **Uaithne**

**Uaithne** was the magic harp of Dagda.

It was stolen by the Fomhoiré, the enemies of the Tuatha Dé Danaan. When Dagda discovered where it was, he called out to the harp to free itself.

The harp responded by killing nine Fomhoiré and then singing Dagda's praises.

Uaithne was also the name of Dagda's harpist.

**II**



Lugh

Although the eventual defeat of the Fomhoiré at the Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh was really due to the sun god, Lugh, it was Dagda who was held in the greatest respect, even after the Tuatha Dé Danaan were in their turn overthrown by the Sons of Míl Éspáine - the ancestors of the present-day Irish.

To Dagda fell the important task of settling the defeated Tuatha Dé Danaan underground mounds. Just as the Fomhoiré retreated beneath the waves, so the vanquished De Danaan disappeared underground. Over the centuries these powerful deities were gradually transformed into fairies - the *bean sidhe* or *Banshees* ("women of the fairies"). *The wailing of the Banshees foretold the approach of human death.*

## X. Manannán mac Lir



**Lir** was the father of **Manannán mac Lir**, the Manx<sup>36</sup> sea god, magician and god of healing. As a sea god, Manannán could stir up or soothe the sea, and help or hinder ships. He often appeared to voyagers at the beginning of their trips. Manannán was lord of the sea beyond and under which lay *Tír na nÓc*, the otherworld. He was one of the most colourful of the Tuatha in his invulnerable mail, a helmet which shone like the sun and armed with his sword which never failed to kill. Killed an eaten every day, his pigs returned to life the following day and provided the Tuatha with some of their supernatural food.

Manannán mac Lir was the ruler of the *Land of Promise*, off the western coast of Ireland, somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean, where he lived in Emain ("of the Apple Trees"). His wife was the renown beauty **Fand**, who fell in love with the Ulster hero **Cú Chulainn** but finally chose to stay with her husband. *Manannán therefore shook a magic cloak between Fand and Cú Chulainn in order to make sure they would never meet again.*

Manannán mac Lir was a noble and handsome warrior, who drove a chariot as easily over the weaves as over a plain and was said to have a self-propellant ship called "Wave Sweeper," with neither sail nor oars but went wherever he willed it. He had both divine and mortal children: One of his mortal sons, **Mongan** was conceived by way of deception:

<sup>36</sup> The Isle of Man is situated in the Irish Sea about halfway between Ireland and Britain.

Manannán assumed the shape of the Ulster king in order to sleep with an Ulster queen disguised as her husband.<sup>37</sup>

When Mongan was three days old, his father took him to one of his otherworld realms, the *Land of Promise*, where the boy remained until he had grown into manhood. Mongan did, however, inherit supernatural gifts, including the ability to shape-change, and he inherited the divine ability of metamorphosis from his father, and he went on to become a great king and a mighty warrior.

Mongan then returned to Ireland reincarnated as **Fionn mac Cumhaill**, the famous leader of the **Fianna**. He used his shape-shifting ability to get his own way, in particular the recovery of his wife *Dubh Lacha*.

## XI. Fionn mac Cumhaill and the Fianna



I

i

### *The Battle of Cnucha*

When Cathair Mor son of Fedlimid Fir Uргlais son of Cormac Gelta-gaith was in the kingship of Tara, and Conn Céchtathlach of the Hundred Battles in Kells, in the rigdonna's lands, Cathair Mor had a celebrated druid, Núadha Airgedlàmh *son of Aichi son of Dathi son of Bóchra son of Fionntan mac Bóchra the Wise, of Tuath-Dathi*<sup>38</sup> in Breg.

The druid was soliciting land in Leinster from Cathair Mor - for he knew that his inheritance would be in Leinster.

Cathair Mor gave him his choice of land. The land the druid chose was Almu in Leinster:

A stronghold was built by the druid at Almu, and *alamu* (*lime*) was rubbed into its wall, until it was all white - it was from that the name "Almu" was applied to it.

Furthermore, Núadha Airgedlàmh's wife was a mortal named Almu *daughter of Bechan* ("small"). She begged that her name be applied to the hill; and her request was granted - *and it is where she is buried.*

Núadha Airgedlàmh and Almu had a son named Tadhg mac Núadhat. Raitiu daughter of Donn-Durna was his wife. Tadhg mac Núadhat was also a celebrated druid. He lived on the Hill of Almu.

<sup>37</sup> Similar to the ruse used by Merlin so that Uther could sleep with Igraine for *Arthur's conception*.

<sup>38</sup> Tuath-Dathi was the name of a district in Bregia, or Meath, with which the name *Brelach-Dathi* may be connected. In 587, a battle was fought at *Brelach-Dathi*, between the Northern and Southern Hy-Neill.

Death came to Núadha Airgedlàmh and he left his stronghold to his son, Tadhg mac Núadhat - and Tadhg mac Núadhat was the druid to Cathair Mor instead of his father.

Raitiu bore a daughter to Tadhg mac Núadhat, her name was Muirne of the Fair Neck - *a granddaughter of Núadha Airgedlàmh and sister to Tuireann.*

The maiden grew up in great beauty, so that the sons of the kings and mighty lords of Ireland were wont to court her.



The same woman was mother to Cumhaill *son of Trénmór* ("strong, great"), warrior-king of Ireland, and Fedlimid Rechtaide, (the "legitimate" "lawgiver"), the father of Conn Céchathlach of the Hundred Battles.

Cumhaill - a leader of the Fenians - was then in the service of Conn Céchathlach of the Hundred Battles, and he, like every other youth, was demanding Muirne of the Fair Neck.

Núadha Airgedlàmh refused him, though, for he knew that Cumhaill would be the cause of him having to leave Almu "of the White Walls."

Cumhaill, however, came and abducted Muirne of the Fair Neck by force.

Tadhg mac Núadhat went to Conn Céchathlach of the Hundred Battles and told him what Cumhaill had done - and incited Conn to reproach him.

Conn Céchathlach of the Hundred Battles sent messengers to Cumhaill which ordered him to restore Muirne of the Fair Neck and to leave Ireland.

Cumhaill said that he would not give up - everything else he would give up, but not the woman.

Conn Céchathlach sent his soldiers, and Urgriu *son of Lugaid Corr king of Luagni*, and Daire the Red (*also known as Morna Wry-neck*) *son of Eochaid the Fair son of Cairbre the Valorous son of Muiredach*, and his son Aodh (who was afterwards called Goll mac Morna), who was leader of one of the clans that made up the Fian, to attack Cumhaill.

Cumhaill, refusing to return Muirne to her father, assembled his army against them - and the Battle of Cnucha was fought between them - and Cumhaill was slain along with many of his people.

Luchet wounded Aodh in the eye, so that he destroyed it; hence it is that the name of Goll (the One-Eyed) was attached to him.

Goll, the "Flame of Battle," killed Luchet. Cumhaill, too, fell by Goll mac Morna.

*It is because of this battle that a hereditary feud existed between the sons of Morna and Fionn mac Cumhaill.*



Fionn mac Cumhaill by Jim Fitzpatrick

Cumhaill *son of Trénmór* is reputed to be buried within the grounds of Castleknock College, (an all-boys secondary school in Dublin), supposedly under a hill upon which an old water tower now stands.

Cumhaill had a brother named Crimmal who was an ally to Fionn.

ii

Muirne of the Fair Neck had already conceived by the time Cumhaill was killed.

She went, after that, to Conn Céchathlach of the Hundred Battles, for her father, Tadhg mac Núadhat the druid, rejected her and would not let her come to him, because she was pregnant; he ordered his people to burn her.

Nevertheless, he dared not compass her destruction against the will of Conn Céchathlach of the Hundred Battles, who, when the girl asked him how she should act, said,

"Go to Fiacial *son of Conchenn*, to Tara Mairci, and let thy delivery be effected there."

This was because Fiacial's wife, Dodball the druidess, was a sister to Cumhaill.

Connla, Conn's son, went with her, to escort her, until she came to Fiacial's house, to Tara Marcia.

Muirne was welcomed by Fiacial and his wife... and his wife bore a son, to whom the name Deimne was given.

Later Cumhaill's young son Deimne was born and brought up secretly at Tara Marci and he was raised in isolation at the home of Bodhmhall, Muirne's sister.

Deimne enjoyed a special affinity with the creatures of the woods. He was brought up on the slopes of Bloom Slieve by two warrior women, who helped him develop the heroic virtues of wisdom and strength.

By the age of ten, Deimne was "fair," both in looks and in play... it was ordered that he should be known as Fionn, for *fionn* means "fair."

Connla son of Conn Céchathlach fell in love with an Otherworldly maiden who came from Tír na mBéo, went to live with her there and was never seen again.



Conchenn - Celtic Goddess of Love and Spring. Daughter of Bodb Dearg, who may be associated with the Celtic God of Love and Beauty.



Fionn mac Cumhaill, illustration by Stephen Reid 1932.

Finn McCool met his uncle, Crimmal, and surviving members of Clan Bascna.

Deimne stayed at Tara Marcia until he was able to raid all who were his enemies.

He then declared war and offered single combat to Tadhg mac Núadhat, unless the full *eric (fine)* for his father be given him. Tadhg mac Núadhat said that he would give him judgment therein, which was that Almu, as it was, should be ceded to him for ever, and Tadhg mac Núadhat was to leave it.

So it was done.

Tadhg mac Núadhat abandoned Almu to Deimne and went to Tuath-Dathi, to his own hereditary land; and he abode in Cnoc Rein, which is called Tadhg's Tulach to this day.



Fionn and the Fianna

Fionn mac Cumhaill, sometimes known as Finn MacCool, Finn mac Cumaill or Fionn MacCumal, was the chieftain who organized the first regular Irish army, the **Fianna**, or Fenians, the select band of warriors which guarded the High King of Ireland. Bascna was the leader of one of the two clans that made up the Fian, the other being clan Morna. Both Bascna and Morna fought alongside their chief Fionn mac Cumhaill.

*iii*

A poet (fili) and seer, Fionn mac Cumhaill became the leader of the Fian, at the age of just eight (ten according to some sources) by defeating the monstrous Aillén mac Midhna - a terrible being of which there is no complete description.

It came to Tara every year at **the feast of Samhain** and, having first bewitched all the warriors with enchanting music, burned down the court.

When Fionn mac Cumhaill came to Tara, he pressed the point of his spear into his forehead and thus remained immune when Aillén mac Midhna started its enchantment.

Then, when Aillén mac Midhna advanced belching smoke and fire, Fionn mac Cumhaill calmly stepped out and beheaded the monster.

He later killed whole hordes of monstrous serpents throughout Ireland, each of which had various attributes of fire and water.

*iv*

Fionn mac Cumhaill went afterwards to Almu, and abode in it. And Almu was his principal residence whilst he lived. One of his tutors was the druid **Finegas**, who lived beside the River Boyne and, hoping to become supremely wise, *he* caught the **Salmon of Knowledge**,

but unfortunately for his own ambitions he gave it to the young Fionn mac Cumhaill to cook.

Fionn burnt his thumb on the flesh and sucked the burn.<sup>39</sup>

Realizing that his pupil Fionn was the one destined to gain the wisdom, Finegas generously let the boy eat the whole fish.



Finegas

So great was Fionn mac Cumhaill's prowess as a warrior that he was soon appointed over the head of Goll mac Morna to lead the Fenians,

as his father had done.

Goll mac Morna, leader of the Connaught branch of the Fianna, accepted this decision with good grace -

a gesture that may explain why Fionn mac Cumhaill did not challenge Goll mac Morna over his father's death.

Fionn mac Cumhaill and Goll mac Morna concluded peace after that, and the *eric* of his father was given by Clan Morna to Fionn.

And they lived peacefully, indeed, *Goll mac Morna* eventually married one of Fionn mac Cumhaill's daughters, though he also slew his son.

A quarrel occurred between them at Tara Luchra, regarding the *Slanga-pig*, when Banb Simm *son of Maelenraig* was slain. This last act of violence was too much and the Fenians pursued him. Trapped, Goll mac Morna chose to starve to death rather than surrender.

Fionn mac Cumhaill quoted a saying of Goll mac Morna: "A man lives after his life but not after his dishonour."

## II

### *The Fenians*

Under Fionn mac Cumhaill's leadership the Fenians reached the high point of their fame as a warrior band.

The majority of their members came from one of two clans, the *Bascna* and the *Morna*.

To join "no man was taken till in the ground a hole was dug, such as would reach the waist, and he put into it with his shield and a forearm's length of hazel stick.

Then must nine warriors, having nine spears, with a ten furrows' width between them and him, assail him and let fly at him.

If he sustained an injury, he was not received into the band."

+

### *Irnan*

**Irnan** was one of three sister witches.

She once spun a magic web to snare some of the Fianna warriors.

The warriors were rescued by *Goll mac Morna* who slew two of the three sisters,

but spared Irnan when she begged for mercy.

However, Irnan instantly changed into a monster and challenged any one of the Fenians to single combat.

Fionn mac Cumhaill stepped forward but was persuaded that it would not be heroic enough for a warrior of his stature to fight a hag, even if she was in the form of a monster.

*Goll mac Morna* slew Irnan and as a reward Fionn allowed *him* to marry his daughter.

## III

### *i*

### *Bodb Dearg*

Fionn mac Cumhaill had many wives and mistresses.

One wife was Cruithne *Priteni*, one of the "painted/tattooed folk" (Picts),

and another was Saar or Sabia, the daughter of Bodb Dearg and the mother, by Fionn mac Cumhaill, of Oisín, who was born to her after she had been transformed into a deer by a druid.

### *ii*

### *Brân and Sgeolan*

Tuireann was the daughter of Bodb and sister of Saar, Fionn mac Cumhaill's wife.

She married Illan, a traditional king of *Leinster*, but was turned into a wolf-hound by her husband's supernatural lover while she was pregnant.

She gave birth to two hounds, Brân and Sgeolan, who became the faithful hunting dogs of Fionn mac Cumhaill, her brother-in-law. Her human form was restored to her after Illan had promised his mistress that he would renounce her.

As a boast, **Oenghus Mac in Og** stated that neither of these hounds would be capable of killing a single swine in his herd but, rather, that his black boar would kill them.

A year later, Fionn mac Cumhaill released his hounds against a herd of a hundred swine that had appeared outside Oenghus Mac in Og's home

and killed them all, Brân killing the prized black boar.

Oenghus Mac in Og complained that the swine had in fact been his children in disguise.

A quarrel followed, during which Fionn mac Cumhaill readied himself to attack Oenghus Mac in Og, but he sued for peace.

### *iii*

Both Ainé and her sister Miluchradh, daughters of **Culann**, divine smith to the Tuatha Dé Danaan, fell in love with Fionn mac Cumhaill,

but Ainé let it slip that she would never marry a man with grey hair. On hearing this, Miluchradh caused a lake to appear, the waters of

which would turn anyone who bathed in them grey in an instant. Miluchradh then turned herself into a hind and allowed herself to be

hunted by Fionn mac Cumhaill,

drawing him towards the lake into which she leapt.

Fionn mac Cumhaill followed her into the water, whereupon Miluchradh disappeared.

<sup>39</sup> The pagan ritual biting or chewing the raw flesh of the thumb to impart sagacity is known as "Imbas forosnal," and was carried across the Irish Sea to Wales were it resurfaces in the story of the witch Cerridwen and Gwion Bach.

When Fionn mac Cumhaill emerged from the lake as a grey-haired man, Ainé lost her love for him, but Miluchradh was shunned by him.

#### IV



i

#### Diarmaid ua Duibhne and Gráinne

**Diarmuid ua Duibhne**, or Diarmuid "of the Love Spot," was the foster-son of the love god Oenghus Mac in Og. His mortal father gave him to the god as a child, a gift that was returned when Diarmuid received the famous *love spot* as a young Fenian warrior. One night, when out hunting, Diarmuid, *Goll mac Morna* and two other companions took shelter in a small hut in a wood. They were welcomed and entertained by an old man and his beautiful daughter. There the young woman received each of the four men, and each of the four men propositioned the girl, but she turned each of them down, saying, that once she had belonged to them, they might never have her again. She chose to sleep only with Diarmuid ua Duibhne. She told him that she was the *personification of youth*, and that the love spot, the ball-seirc, she put on his forehead would make him irresistible to women. As a consequence, Diarmuid's life was almost continuously troubled by desperate women, the worst being **Gráinne daughter of High King Cormac mac Airt** - even though she was betrothed to the aging widower Fionn mac Cumhaill, of whom Diarmuid ua Duibhne was a loyal subject. On the night of her wedding feast, the beautiful Gráinne drugged Fionn mac Cumhaill and all those present

and then, casting *a geasa spell* on Diarmuid ua Duibhne, one of those not drugged, and forced him to elope with her to a wood in Connacht...

Only Oisín, Oscar and Caoilte mac Ronan were not given the sleeping draught that Gráinne administered, and so witnessed the bond under which she placed Diarmuid ua Duibhne to elope with her, and were instrumental in making sure that he complied, as he was honour bound to do so.

When they had recovered from the effects of the drug, Fionn mac Cumhaill and his men went after the lovers.

The Fenians were relentless in the chase, the pursuit of Diarmuid ua Duibhne alone took sixteen years, but, at the request of the king and the love god, a peace of sorts was begrudgingly agreed.

Finally, they were besieged in the wood in Connacht by the Fenian commander Fionn mac Cumhaill.

Gráinne was rescued from the wood in Connacht by Oenghus Mac in Og, who carried her to safety, while Diarmuid au Duibhne escaped by jumping in a single tremendous bound, straight over the heads of the besieging horde. Safe from attack, Diarmuid au Duibhne, however, remained loyal to his former master and still refused to break his oath to Fionn mac Cumhaill and to take the maiden Gráinne as his mistress, and it was only after she had intolerably derided him that he was driven to be disloyal and broke his oath to Fionn mac Cumhaill.



A Celtic warrior

Caoilte mac Ronan, the "fleetest of foot who could overtake the March wind," lived for many hundreds of years after the destruction of the Fian.

ii

During the sixteen year flight of Gráinne and Diarmuid au Diubhne from the Fianna, the hard-pressed lovers became friends with **Searbhan**, a Fomhoiré warrior who allowed them to shelter in the branches of a magic tree he guarded, which no one dared approach - which made it difficult for Fionn mac Cumhaill to find them. However, Searbhan and Diarmuid came to blows when Gráinne attempted to eat some of the magic berries that grew on the tree, and the one-armed, one-legged Fomhoiré warrior was killed.

It seemed that Diarmuid and Gráinne would settle down to a contented family life and they had four sons and finally, with the help of Oenghus Mac in Og, they were reconciled with Fionn mac Cumhaill. So complete was their reconciliation that Fionn mac Cumhaill invited Diarmuid ua Duibhne to accompany him in the hunt for the magical boar Beann Ghulban, even though it had been prophesied that the boar was Diarmuid au Diubhne's foster-brother [ ] and would kill him.

But Diarmuid's own destiny was about to catch up with him. His mortal father had killed his brother because he believed that Oenghus Mac in Og's steward, *Roc*, was responsible for the pregnancy. However, *Roc* received the infant as a magic boar and told it to bring Diarmuid to his death. When hunting one day with Cormac mac Airt and Fionn mac Cumhaill, Diarmuid came face to face with this creature. His hounds fled in terror, his sling-shot had no impact on the charging boar's head and his sword broke in two, so that the irresistible Diarmuid was mortally gored and left bleeding to death on the ground.<sup>40</sup> He managed to dispatch the beast with his broken sword. His life could be saved only if Fionn mac Cumhaill, who had the gift of healing, would give him some water out of his own hands.

Fionn mac Cumhaill fetched some water but, remembering Diarmuid au Diubhne's treachery for the elopement, allowed it to trickle away through his fingers and exalted over his rival's mortal wound. Again he fetched some water, and again allowed it to seep away. By the time he retuned a third time Diarmuid au Diubhne was too near death to be saved. By this time the other hunters arrived on the scene.

Gráinne was devastated by the loss, although she was moved by the way that Oenghus Mac in Og took care of Diarmuid's corpse. He took the body to his own palace by the River Boyne, where he breathed a new soul into Diarmuid au Diubhne so that they could converse each day. This is how the young man came to live with the Tuatha Dé Danaan, who had by this time left the upper world and lived beneath the soil of Ireland.

+

Fionn mac Cumhaill died attempting to quell an uprising among the Fenians - and was buried in a cave. He was said to have died at the age of 230, his death causing the decline and eventual disbanding of the Fian. *There he remains in a deep sleep until such a time as Ireland needs his aid.*

## XII. The War Goddesses: Badb, Mórrighan, Nemain and Macha

I

**Badb** (meaning "crow") was an Irish goddess of battle.<sup>41</sup>

II



**Mórrighan**, sometimes known as Morrigu, was an Irish goddess of *death on the battlefield* who helped the Tuatha Dé Danaan at both battles of *Magh Tuireadh*. Her favorite form was the crow, and as such she settled in triumph on the shoulder of the Ulster hero Cú Chulainn when he was finally killed in the war against Queen Medbh's forces. *Cú Chulainn had not only refused Mórrighan's love, but in anger had even wounded her. For such a deed his fate was sealed.*

III

**Nemain** (whose name means "dreadful" or "venomous") was a goddess of war who sometimes appeared as a beautiful young woman and sometimes as crows, screeching over the battlefield. Nemain was the wife of **Núadha**, the leader of the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

IV

**Macha** was one of the Irish war goddesses. She was the eponymous warrior-queen who forced the *sons of her enemies* into building the fortifications of the capital of Ulster, Emain Macha.

<sup>40</sup> Apollo turned himself into a boar and killed *Adonis* to avenge his son.

<sup>41</sup> Myth connects Badb with the historical battle of Clontarf in 1014, when High King Brian defeated the Viking invaders and Badb appeared over the warriors' heads.

She first married **Neimheadh**, a Scythian ruler who defeated the Fomhoiré, the sea gods who slew her second husband **Núadha** and herself at the **Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh**.

She was later the wife of *Crunnchu*, a peasant farmer.

A later Macha laid a bitter curse on Ulster after her boastful husband said that, though heavy with child, she could outrun all the king's horses and chariots. The king of Ulster threatened to execute her husband if she did not race.

Macha won the race and gave birth to twins, which is said to be the reason for calling the fortress of the Ulster king Emain Macha ("Macha's Twins"). In dying, **Macha** cursed all Ulstermen to suffer the pain of childbirth for five days and five nights whenever the kingdom was in danger - at the time of Ulster's greatest need.

### XIII. Brighid Brigantia



Saint Brigid of Kildare (also known as Bride, Bridget, Brigit)

**Brighid**, sometimes known as **Brigit**, was a goddess of healing and fertility who assisted women in labour. She was widely worshipped in Ireland and Britain, where she was known as **Brigantia** ("High One" or "Queen"), the chief goddess of the Brigantes, the dominant tribe in the north of England before the invasion of the Romans. She was also associated with water, war and prosperity. A widely revered goddess, she was worshipped throughout the Celtic world. In France she was known as **Brigindo**.

She was the wife of **Bres**, the half-Fomhoiré god who briefly led the Tuatha Dé Danaan after the **First Battle of Cét-chath Maige Tuireadh** against the Fir Bholg.

Bres was handsome but also oppressive, like all Fomhoiré, so his reign was short.

Brigid, however, bore him three sons.

She often appears as an alternative for her mother the mother goddess **Anu** (sometimes called Danu or Dana). The Tuatha Dé Danaan ("the people of the goddess Dana") were her divine children and the gods and goddesses who ruled Ireland prior to the arrival of the Milesians.

### XIV. Oenghus Mac in Og and Caer the Swan Maiden



The Dagda, on his way to his house in Glen Eadin, spies a woman bathing in the River Uinshin. They unite in the waters at a place since known as the Bed of the Coupling. Image of the Morrigan & the Dagda © Jim Fitzpatrick.

I



Áengus mac Óg

**Oenghus Mac in Og**<sup>42</sup> was the Irish love god. His epithet meaning "Young Lad."

<sup>42</sup> **Oenghus Mac in Og** is the Irish equivalent of the Gaulish Maponos and the Welsh Mabon. An historic king named Oenghus ruled in Cashel, his death being given as AD 490. Although he probably owes his name to the god Oenghus Mac in Og, he has no other connections with the deity. He later

His father was **Dagda**, the father of the gods and protector of druids.

Dagda coveted the water goddess **Eithne**, the wife of Elcmar, and sent him on a diplomatic mission and then caused the sun to remain in the sky for nine months and Elcmar not to feel hungry for the same period. During his absence Eithne was seduced by the Dagda and conceived a divine love-child, Oenghus Mac in Og,<sup>43</sup> who, hours before Elcmar returned, was sent to be fostered by Midhir, a god of *Tir Tairngiri*, the otherworldly **Land of Promise**. Midhir subsequently sent the boy back to be fostered by Elcmar, who obviously believed that Oenghus Mac in Og was the son of Midhir.

## II

A clever trickster, Oenghus Mac in Og gained possession of *Brugh na Bóinne* from his father, the Dagda - or, some say, from his foster-father *Elcmar*.

There he set up his home.

Although a god born of primal powers, he is usually not regarded as a healing deity, but rather as the god of wit, charm and fatal love...

*Brugh na Bóinne*<sup>44</sup> was located in an area formed by a twist in the River Boyne between the present-day towns of Slane and Oldbridge.

## III

Oenghus Mac in Og was handsome and four birds always hovered above his head

which were said to represent kisses.

Birds also feature in his courtship of **Caer**, a fairy maiden of divine descent who came from *Connacht* and lived as a swan.

Her father *Ethal Anubal*, prince of *Connacht*, was one of the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

Oenghus Mac in Og became aware of Caer in a dream and so attracted was he to her beauty that he fell into a deep sickness, but no matter how hard he searched he could not find her.

**Bodb Dearn**, a king of *Munster*, sometimes known as *Bōv*, was employed by the Dagda to seek out a "dream maiden" whom Oenghus Mac in Og had fallen in love.

Oenghus Mac in Og had to wait a year before **Bodb Dearn** reported that he had found the "dream maiden" on the banks of a lake with her 149 sisters.

When the identity of Caer was discovered, Oenghus Mac in Og immediately traveled to the lake and asked her father, *Ethal Anubal*, a prince of *Connacht*, for her hand;

but *Ethal Anubal* said that it was not in his power to grant this because his daughter had taken the form of a swan.

Oenghus Mac in Og enlisted the help of Ailill mac Máta and Medbh to make *Ethal Anubal* a prisoner. Still he refused to hand over his daughter, as he feared her magical powers.

It was finally agreed, however, that Oenghus Mac in Og could marry Caer

provided he could identify her from the large flock of swans whom she lived and she was willing to be his bride.

On the **feast of Samhain**, Oenghus Mac in Og found Caer swimming on the **Lake of the Dragon's Mouth** with a hundred and fifty other swans.

He instantly recognized her and called out her name and explained to Caer his love for her - and she agreed to marry him. Her father was released.

As Oenghus Mac in Og reached out to her, though, he was turned into a swan, and they flew away together to *Brugh na Bóinne*.



resurfaced in the Arthurian legends as King Anguish, a name that couples a Gaelic trait with the translation of Oenghus as Angus.

<sup>43</sup> In another story, Oenghus Mac in Og's mother is possibly **Boann**, the sister of Elcmar, who was married either to *Elcmar* or **Nechtan**, a water god.

On Necthan's hill there was a **sacred well of inspiration** that was the source of all knowledge, to which only **Nechtan** and his three cup-bearers had access. When Boann found her way to the well, violating the sanctity of the holy place, in an outrage the waters bubbled up from the ground and swelled into a torrent chasing after her, becoming the River Boyne - in its current swam **the salmon of knowledge**.

<sup>44</sup> This mound is, after *Tara* itself, the most important Bronze Age relic in Ireland. *Brugh na Bóinne*, or New Grange, is an Earth mound some 36 feet high and shaped like an inverted saucer. An entrance hall, lined with slabs of stone, runs 60 feet into the mound before opening out into a spacious chamber approximately 20 feet high. The roof of this chamber is corbelled - that is, it is made of overlapping stones with a circular stone to finish it off at its center. It is so well constructed that the interior was bone dry when it was discovered in 1699 by Edward Lhwyd.

Evacuations at *Brugh na Bóinne* have revealed an unusual opening above the entrance that allows the morning sun on the winter solstice to illuminate the central chamber, shining directly unto three linked spirals carved into the wall. By itself this is not particularly remarkable, but the entrance hall is slightly curved, and yet the sun manages to slice through at a precise angle and light up the design. This feat of engineering, coupled with the excellence of the construction and ornamentation, indicates that *Brugh na Bóinne* was constructed by a highly refined people.

The entrance stone to the tumulus is perhaps the finest example of megalithic art in western Europe. It is finely carved with a complex pattern of arcs, spirals and diamonds, the entire surface being finely textured with dots which give it a rich green colour.

The date of the construction of *Brugh na Bóinne* is still open to question. Radiocarbon dating places this at about 2500 BCE, but current thinking makes the tumulus at least 500 years earlier, thus making it contemporary with the construction of the pyramids in Egypt. Regrettably, the exact purpose of *Brugh na Bóinne*, other than its legendary connection with Oenghus Mac in Og, will never be known as the Danes plundered the site in the ninth century.

The fili maintained an oral tradition that predated the Christianization of Ireland. In this tradition, poetic and musical forms are important not only for aesthetics, but also for their mnemonic value.

## IV

Oenghus Mac in Og is best known from his wooing of **Édáin Echraídhe** for his foster-father Midhir, wooing that was successful, and during which he undoubtedly used his various guiles on **Édáin Echraídhe**.

Oenghus fostered Diarmaid ua Duibhne, whom he helped when he was besieged in a wood in *Connacht* by Fionn mac Cumhaill, after Gráinne had induced Diarmaid ua Duibhne to elope with her. Oenghus saved Gráinne, whilst Diarmaid ua Duibhne escaped by leaping over the heads of the attackers, a trick no doubt taught to him by Oenghus, who later reconciled his foster-son and Gráinne with Fionn mac Cumhaill.

After the death of Diarmaid ua Duibhne, Oenghus took that hero to live with him at *Brugh na Bóinne*, and there shared his immortality with him.

## XV. Amhairghin the fili

**Amhairghin the poet**, a son of Míl Éspáine, was one of the first Irish druids, the ancient priests in Celtic lands. He came to Ireland with the Milesians, or Gaels.<sup>45</sup> *En route*, his wife Skena fell overboard and was drowned. These children of Milesius, or Míl, who was a leader of the Celts who lived in Spain, were the ancestors of the present-day Irish. Having defeated the divine rulers of Ireland, the Tuatha Dé Danaan, the Milesians could not agree on which of their leaders should be king. He possessed both spiritual and political authority, and pronounced the first judgment in the land, deciding who would be the first king. After the defeat of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, the advice of Amhairghin was ignored by Éber Finn, who refused to acknowledge the right of his older brother Éremón, to be king of the whole island. The two sons of Míl contested the throne and for the sake of peace in the island was divided into two kingdoms, Éremón ruling in the north, and Éber Finn in the south. However, peace was not to survive long. Éber Finn invaded Éremón's territory and laid waste to the land, and renewed fighting between the followers of the two brothers plunged the country once again into dreadful strife. The fighting came to an end only with the death of Éber Finn. Amhairghin then installed Éremón as the first High King of Ireland at Tara. Even then conflicts still occurred because of the ceaseless rivalries between lesser rulers.



An inspired shaman and seer, Amhairghin the poet is credited with a mystical poem in the Book of Invasions.

<sup>45</sup> The name by which the human inhabitants of Ireland, and latterly Scotland, are properly known, their name giving rise to the Gaelic language. The definition was first used to describe the Sons of Míl Éspáine, the first human inhabitants of Ireland.

## Part the Second

### XVI. Pwyll, Rhiannon and Pryderi

#### I

##### *The Children of Dôn*

**Gwydion fab Dôn** was an all-powerful father god, magician and poet, a son of the Welsh mother goddess Dôn: She had many children, including **Amaethon**, **Arianrhod**, **Govannon**, Gwydion fab Dôn, **Gilfaethwy** and **Nudd Llawereint** ("Silver-handed").<sup>46</sup>

Gwydion fab Dôn was the nephew of **Math fab Mathonwy**, lord of the Welsh kingdom of *Gwynedd* in the north. Dôn was the daughter of *Mathonwy*, sister of Math fab Mathonwy, and the wife of *Beli*, the god of death.

Amaethon (whose name means "labourer" or "ploughman") was the god of agriculture.

Amaethon stole from **Arawn**, the lord of the underworld **Annwn**, a hound, a deer and a bird, and as a result caused the *Cad Goddeu* or *Battle of Trees*. It was in this battle that Amaethon's brother, Gwydion fab Dôn, magically transformed trees into warriors to fight in the battle.

Nudd ruled Britain at a time when it was plagued by a strange May Eve scream.

It transpired that two subterranean dragons caused the scream during an annual battle.

They were soothed by sinking mead into a pit dug through the center of the earth.

Greatest of *the Children of Dôn*, Gwydion fab Dôn was skilled in the arts of war and peace and underwent trials at the hands of hostile powers, *much the way Dagda suffered ordeals when subject to the Fomhoiréans*.

At the time that **Pryderi**, son of **Pwyll**, was a notable chieftain who ruled over *Dyfed* in the southern part of Wales., Math fab Mathonwy possessed magical powers and was skilled in poetry and eloquence.

#### II

##### Pwyll and Rhiannon

Pwyll's authority reached into Annwn, *the Welsh otherworld* - an idyllic land of peace and plenty, fruitfulness and rest, and filled with the song of birds.

Indeed, he boasted the title Pen Annwn ("Lord of Beyond"). In Annwn there was a fountain of sweet wine and a cauldron of rebirth - which was the basis of the grail myth - which was guarded by nine maidens, healed the sick and restored the dead to life. The lord of Annwn was the grey-clad Arawn.

Arawn had a pack of snowy-white hounds with red ears - "the hounds of hell," which were believed to fly at night in pursuit of human souls.

One day Pwyll was hunting in an enchanted forest when he encountered a strange pack of hounds chasing a stag, so he drove them off and set his own hounds on to the cornered prey. Just as the stag was about to fall, a grey-clad horseman appeared and rebuked Pwyll for the courtesy in the field for chasing off his hounds.

<sup>46</sup> Nudd, known as Llud to the British, is the Welsh equivalent to Nuadha. He also had a silver hand - and was known as Llud Llawereint ("Silver-handed").

Pwyll accepted the charge and promised to make amends, at which the stranger revealed himself to be Arawn, the ruler of Annwn. In order to placate Arawn and to gain his friendship, Pwyll accepted a proposal that he should exchange forms and responsibilities with him for a year and then slay Arawn's enemy, *Havgan*. It was also agreed that Pwyll would share the bed of Arawn's queen for the same period of time, but without making love to her.



Rhiannon is a Welsh Moon Goddess.  
Her name means "White Witch or Great

Arawn warned Pwyll that he must kill *Havgan* by a single blow, for if he struck a second time he instantly revived. When Pwyll and *Havgan* fought, the Welsh chieftain dealt him a fatal blow and ignored *Havgan's* plea to finish him off with another strike. As a result of this service, Arawn and Pwyll became close allies and *Dyfed* prospered. Pwyll, having successfully killed *Havgan* and fulfilled his promise to Arawn, returned home.



Rhiannon, the Celtic goddess of the moon was a Welch goddess. The goddess Rhiannon's name meant "Divine Queen" of the fairies.

**Rhiannon** Rig Antona ("Great High Queen"), daughter of *Hefeydd Hêñ*, is the goddess of horses.<sup>47</sup> Her totem animals were the bull and three cranes - *animals that have associations with death and rebirth*. Rhiannon's singing birds were heralds of the otherworld. Their enchanting song was said to be able to wake the dead and send the living into a deep sleep. Rhiannon was extremely beautiful, a beauty that led Pwyll to become enchanted by her. She was first seen by Pwyll as a vision in white and gold, riding "*a fine pearly steed* covered with a garment of shining gold and brocaded silk."  
He sought her hand, a union that was agreed to by both Rhiannon and her father. However, a feast to celebrate their betrothal her rejected suitor *Gwawl fab Clud*, disguised as a handsome, richly dressed youth, entered *Hefeydd Hêñ's*<sup>48</sup> house and asked a boon of Pwyll - a boon that was unthinkingly granted. *Gwawl fab Clud* asked for Rhiannon. Although horrified by the boon, both Pwyll and Rhiannon were honour-bound to comply, However, Rhiannon, furious but compliant, suggested that they should postpone her meeting with *Gwawl fab Clud* for a year, a suggestion that was accepted by both parties. Rhiannon then concocted a plan with Pwyll: Rhiannon advised Pwyll that he should, on the night in question, have ready one hundred of his men hiding in the orchard. He himself was to enter her "wedding" feast in the guise of a shabbily-dressed beggar carrying a sack. He should then ask for enough food to fill the sack, a request to which she should accede. They would trick *Gwawl fab Clud* into treading the food down into the sack, and thus capture him. Everything went as planned, and, as the sack was tied around *Gwawl fab Clud*, Pwyll blew his horn and summoned his men, who began to kick the sack around the hall until *Gwawl fab Clud* was forced to beg for mercy and to withdraw his claim on Rhiannon. Only when he had also promised never to seek vengeance was *Gwawl fab Clud* released and sent on his way.

Once overpowered, *Gwawl fab Clud* agreed to leave the two in peace, although *Gwawl fab Clud* never forgave him, and as a result *his* estranged father had laid a bitter curse upon his household with strange misfortunes, *both before and after Pwyll's death*.

Pwyll then wooed and won Rhiannon for his wife. For three years no child was born and, angered at her barrenness, Pwyll treated Rhiannon unkindly. Pwyll's advisors beseeched him to take another wife. He refused and within the year Rhiannon at last gave birth to a son. His attitude became worse after the baby was born, though, because when his infant son was stolen, her ladies-in-waiting were so afraid of Pwyll that they blamed Rhiannon. They laid bones next to their sleeping mistress and smeared her face and hands with blood. When Rhiannon awoke in amazement, the maids unjustly accused her to Pwyll of devouring the newborn in the night. Pwyll refused to accept that his wife could possibly have done such a thing, but, as she would not defend herself, was forced to make her do penance, by carrying all those who accepted her offer into the castle.

Rhiannon is a singular figure in Welsh mythology. She bore her suffering and injustice with a patience that still seems remarkable.

<sup>47</sup> Rhiannon is known as Epona in Gaul and as Édáin Echraighe and Macha in Ireland.

<sup>48</sup> Hêñ, meaning "the Old."



Celtic Moon Goddess Rhiannon

Pryderi was snatched from his cot by *one of Rhiannon's rejected suitors* and brought up by **Teyrnon Twryf Liant**, a chieftain who discovered the infant in his stable.

### III

#### *Teyrnon Twryf Liant*

Teyrnon Twryf Liant was lord of *Gwent Is Coed* - and foster-father of Pryderi.

Teyrnon Twryf Liant owned a beautiful mare, and every year on the eve of *the first of May* the animal gave birth to a foal... but whose colts mysteriously disappeared.

One year, unable to withstand the loss any longer, Teyrnon Twryf Liant decided to hide in the stable and keep watch to see what would happen.

His mare foaled and, as he stood and gazed on the wondrous colt, a giant clawed hand came through the stable window and took the new-born foal.

Teyrnon Twryf Liant jumped up and hacked off the hand at the elbow so that it fell into the stable alongside the colt.

He rushed outside to see if he could identify the thief, but nothing was in sight.

As he came back into the stable, he heard a crying and found a three-day-old baby boy lying ion the stable.

Teyrnon Twryf Liant and his wife took the child in and raised him as one of their own.

The chieftain's wife named the child Gwri, or "Golden Hair," but when, after a year, having learnt of the mysterious disappearance of the newborn baby boy of Pwyll and Rhiannon, and struck by the child's resemblance to Pwyll, Teyrnon Twryf Liant took the infant to the king, who was overjoyed to be reunited with his son.

Amid great celebrations Rhiannon renamed him Pryderi, "Care," because during the child's absence her life had been very careworn.

She had been falsely accused of killing him and was made to do penance by sitting at the gate of Pwyll's fortress and telling strangers of her crime, then offering to carry them on her back into his great hall.  
*Not until the return of her son was Rhiannon excused from her penance.*

Pwyll died a short time later.



Rhiannon and Pryderi

Pryderi grew into a handsome and brave warrior under the guidance of his foster father Pendaran Dyfed.

He succeeded his father and was much loved by his people, eventually marrying Cigfa, the daughter of Gwyn Gohoyw the Great.

### IV

#### *Manawydan fab Llyr*

As Pryderi grew, the resemblance to Pwyll became increasingly marked until they knew that he was the missing son of Pwyll and Rhiannon.

When Pwyll died, Pryderi succeeded him as lord of *Dyfed*.

Penardun, the sister-daughter of Beli Mawr, a legendary early Briton, was the mother of Manawydan fab Llyr - brother and heir of Bendigeidfran Vran [and Branwen] and a cousin of Pryderi.

Following the destructive expedition led by Bendigeidfran Vran to Ireland against Matholwch,

Pryderi found that his cousin **Manawydan fab Llyr**, son of the Welsh sea god Llyr, the rightful heir of Bendigeidfran Vran, had been disinherited by Caswallawn, son of Beli Mawr.

Pryderi compensated for the loss by giving Manawydan fab Llyr his mother Rhiannon to be his wife

together with the seven *cantref*<sup>49</sup> of *Demetia*.<sup>50</sup>

Manawydan fab Llyr appears as a mortal warrior rather than a god.

At their wedding banquet, Manawydan fab Llyr, Pryderi and their wives were feasting...

there was a loud peal of thunder and a magical mist fell like a dark cloud from which there emanated a brilliant light that enveloped them all.

"No one could see the other, although the great hall was filled with light."

When the light disappeared and the mist cleared, their palace was deserted and the land around it was desolate.

All the people, animals and crops were gone.

Pryderi, his wife *Cigfa*, Manawydan fab Llyr and Rhiannon were the only people left in the entire realm.

For two years they lived haply eking out an existence on wild honey, catching the fish that filled the streams and rivers and hunting the game that freely roamed the forests.

At length, growing tired of their solitary life, they finally decided to travel across the border to *Lloegyr*, present-day England.

Pryderi and Manawydan fab Llyr decided to go from town-to-town to earn a living as leather-workers.

So successful were they that it made them many enemies and local craftsmen forced them to leave.

So they returned to Wales.

A short time later, while they were out hunting in the forest, their dogs disappeared into a ruined caer.<sup>51</sup>

Against Manawydan fab Llyr's advice, Pryderi entered to bring them out...

Pryderi came across a **golden bowl** fastened by four chains on a marble slab.

Pryderi went to pick it up, but his hands were enchanted and stuck to the bowl and he found that he could not move or let it go.

He was also struck dumb.

Manawydan fab Llyr waited until dusk for his cousin to reappear before returning to Rhiannon.

She immediately went to the caer and seeing a door in it, a door that remained invisible to Manawydan fab Llyr, she too entered the caer and was trapped.

That night the caer disappeared into another mist, taking Pryderi and Rhiannon with it and leaving *Cigfa* and Manawydan alone.

When *Cigfa*, Pryderi's wife, realized that they had been left alone, Manawydan fab Llyr promised to provide for her and having neither dogs to hunt nor any other means of support, set himself up as a cobbler.

So skilful was he that they soon prospered and were, within a year, able to return and establish three crofts.

These Manawydan fab Llyr sowed with wheat.

When the time came to reap the first he found that the entire crop had been eaten.

The same happened when the second ripened, so he kept watch on the third.

<sup>49</sup> A *cantref* is a medieval Welsh land division, particularly important in the administration of Welsh law. Land in medieval Wales was divided into *cantrefi*, which were themselves divided into smaller *cymydau* (*commotes*). The name *cantref* is derived from *Cant* ("a hundred") and *tref* ("town").

<sup>50</sup> The ancient name for the kingdom of Dyfed in the south of Wales.

<sup>51</sup> The Welsh for an earthen barrow, the equivalent of the Irish *sídh*.

As it ripened he saw a host of mice appear and start to devour every last ear.

He caught one of the mice and took it home, vowing that he would solemnly hang it the following day for eating their corn.

*Cigfa* tried to dissuade him from carrying out such a ridiculous punishment, but Manawydan fab Llyr insisted.

The next day, as he was preparing his tiny gallows, a poor clerk came by, then a richly dressed priest and finally a bishop with all his retinue, the first people either Manawydan fab Llyr and *Cigfa* had seen in over a year.

Each offered Manawydan fab Llyr a purse of money to save the life of the mouse.

All their offers were refused, but the bishop raised his offer, saying that, in return for the life of the mouse, he would grant Manawydan fab Llyr whatever he wished.

Manawydan fab Llyr demanded the return of Pryderi and Rhiannon and that the spell over their lands be lifted.

The bishop agreed, adding that the mouse was his wife and that he was the magician Llwyd fab Cil Coed - an old enemy of Pwyll, Pryderi's father.

Other mice helping to devour the crops were his warriors transformed by magic.

Llwyd fab Cil Coed had cast the spell to avenge Pwyll's treatment of his friend Gwawl fab Clud.

The spell was immediately lifted the moment Manawydan fab Llyr handed the mouse over to the bishop,

Pryderi and Rhiannon and their dogs reappeared and, at last, *Dyfed* was restored to its former prosperous state.

During the temporary disappearance, Pryderi and his mother had been forced to work as donkeys.

## V

### ***Math fab Mathonwy***

Except during war, the magician Math fab Mathonwy, lord of *Gwynedd*, could only live if his feet were held in the lap of a virgin.

Learning of his brother *Gilfaethwy*'s desire for *Goewin*, the young woman who was Math fab Mathonwy's footholder, Gwydion fab Dôn stirred up a quarrel between Math fab Mathonwy and Pryderi, which meant that the king went away to war (with Pryderi) - so that the girl might be left behind.

Gwydion fab Dôn learned of a herd of magic swine in the possession of Pryderi whose father had received them as a gift from Arawn.

Gwydion fab Dôn brought the herd of magic swine owned by Pryderi to the attention of Math fab Mathonwy and sought his permission to bring them back for him.

Math fab Mathonwy agreed, and Gwydion fab Dôn set off... disguised as a bard and in the company of eleven others, all similarly disguised;

they traveled to Dyfed, where they were hospitably received by Pryderi.

Gwydion fab Dôn told Pryderi of his errand and promised to show him a fair exchange for the swine the very next morning.

That night Gwydion fab Dôn, a resourceful magician, secretly created, by magic, twelve magnificent stallions, twelve greyhounds with golden collars and twelve golden shields.

Pryderi was shown the magically created animals and shields and, after consulting his lords, agreed to the exchange.

Gwydion fab Dôn and *Gilfaethwy* made off quickly from Pryderi's castle with his precious swine, originally the property of Arawn, which he had magically acquired, for he knew that after two days his spell would fail.



Pryderi's death in single combat

Two days later the enchantment wrought by Gwydion fab Dôn wore off, and Pryderi was left with nothing - and he set off in pursuit of Gwydion fab Dôn.

Pryderi marched into *Gwynedd* to avenge the theft of his swine by Math fab Mathonwy, who mustered his army against Pryderi and went out to meet the attack, but the match was unequal as Gwydion fab Dôn bewitched Pryderi with magical illusions. After two bloody battles it was agreed that the dispute was to be decided by single combat at Maen Tyriawg.<sup>52</sup> Math fab Mathonwy killed good King Pryderi using his magical powers.

However, the whole issue of the herd of swine was nothing more than a smoke screen, invented by Gwydion fab Dôn to help his brother, *Gilfaethwy*, who had fallen for Math fab Mathonwy's footholder, the virgin *Goewin*.

While Math fab Mathonwy was absent fighting Pryderi, the two brothers abducted *Goewin*, and took turns in ravishing her.

When Math fab Mathonwy returned, Gwydion fab Dôn and his brother, *Gilfaethwy*, were both punished for their rape of *Goewin*. Math fab Mathonwy decreed that the two should spend the next three years as a male and female animals, each year mating and producing at least one offspring.

The first year he turned his nephews into a stag and hind, the second into a boar and a sow, and into a pair of wolves for the third.

At the end of the third year Math fab Mathonwy considered that they had been humiliated enough and restored the brothers to their human form and forgave them for their crime.

\*

\*

Later Gwydion fab Dôn took charge of his sister Arianrhod's son Llew Llaw Gyffes.

## XVII. Arianrhod, mother of Llew Llaw Gyffes of the Strong Hand



**Arianrhod** was the daughter of the Welsh goddess Dôn, niece of Math fab Mathonwy, and sister of Gwydion fab Dôn. Arianrhod was a stellar figure, a goddess of time, space and energy, associated with the observation of a particular group of stars.<sup>53</sup>

Math fab Mathonwy could sleep only if his feet were in a virgin's lap, and when *Goewin*, the virgin who usually acted this royal position for him was raped by his nephews, Gwydion fab Dôn and his brother *Gilfaethwy*, it was suggested by her brother, Gwydion fab Dôn, that Arianrhod should take her place at court.

Arianrhod had to step over Math fab Mathonwy's wand in a rite that would attest to her purity.

However, no sooner had she done so than two bundles fell from her... the first was a golden-haired boy named **Dylan**, who grew to maturity in an instant, leapt from his mother's arms at birth, plunged straight into the sea and swam as well as any fish.

Thereafter, adopting the sea's nature, he became known as Dylan Eil Ton, or Dylan "Son of the Wave," a Welsh sea deity.

When his uncle, the smith god *Govannon*, killed him, all the waves in Britain and Ireland lamented his death.

Beloved by the sea, his death groan can still be heard in the roar of the incoming tide.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Arianrhod, in her stellar role, is supported by the fact that in Welsh the constellation of corona borealis is known as Caer Arianrhod, "Arianrhod's Castle," although this name is also applied to the aurora borealis, the northern lights. Her name means "queen of the wheel," "silver wheel" or "high fruitful mother," which has led to her being referred to as the goddess of the starry wheel. Cf. Ariadne, an earth goddess who also has stellar significance. Note: Arianrhod's name gave rise to Argante, the elfin Queen of Avalon.

<sup>54</sup> The grave of Dylan Eil Ton is said to be Maen Dylan, the Stone of Dylan, a stone that stands on a gravel bank approximately 2 miles south of a reef of stones off the coast of Gwynedd that is known as Caer Arianrhod, about three-quarters of a mile off shore, and thus visible at low tide only.

<sup>52</sup> An ancient name for Maentwrog.

The second bundle was also a baby boy, Gwydion fab Dôn, Arianrhod's brother, quickly concealed him in a chest and later adopted him and brought him up. Four years passed before Gwydion fab Dôn showed the boy to his mother, but embarrassed by the reminder of her shame, Arianrhod placed a taboo upon him, cursing the boy, saying that he should have no name until she herself gave him one, something she had no intention of doing.

Gwydion fab Dôn evaded the curse by disguising both himself and the boy and tricking his sister into naming her son **Lleu Llaw Gyffes**,<sup>55</sup> which means "*Bright One of the Nimble Hand.*"

Furious at the trick, for Gwydion fab Dôn could not resist taunting his sister with the fact that she had named her son, Arianrhod again cursed the boy saying this time that he would never bear arms until she herself bestowed them upon him.

Again, her brother found a way around the curse, this time he and the now maturing Lleu Llaw Gyffes traveled to Arianrhod's castle, Caer Arianrhod, on the isle of Anglesey, and, by use of magic, laid siege to her castle, Caer Arianrhod.

In her fright, Arianrhod gave weapons to her son and begged him to protect her, although as he was in disguise there was no way she could know who he was.

Once more Gwydion fab Dôn could not resist taunting his sister, so Arianrhod cursed the unfortunate Lleu Llaw Gyffes for a third time, this time saying that he was to have no wife of the human race.

This final taboo was again overcome by Gwydion fab Dôn, although this time he needed to enlist the help of the magician Math fab Mathonwy.



Blodeuedd's creation

Together they manufactured Lleu Llaw Gyffes a wife from the flowers of oak, broom and meadowsweet and named **Blodeuedd**, (whose name means "born of flowers" or "flower-face"),

a beautiful, magical woman, who was the fairest woman in the world. Lleu Llaw Gyffes married Blodeuedd, but the wife conjured by Gwydion fab Dôn and Math fab Mathonwy was nearly Lleu Llaw Gyffes' undoing...

For a time the young couple lived together happily, but one day Lleu Llaw Gyffes went to visit Math fab Mathonwy and while he was away Blodeuedd kindly offered hospitality to a passing huntsman, Goronwy Bebyr, the lord of *Penllyn*, Blodeuedd started an affair with Goronwy Bebyr and, together, the lovers plotted his death,

but they knew that this could not be accomplished before their victim had revealed the exact manner in which he could be dealt a mortal blow.

At Goronwy Bebyr's suggestion, Blodeuedd set about discovering how Lleu Llaw Gyffes might be killed.

Finally, at length, Blodeuedd managed to persuade her husband to reveal that he could be killed only by a spear that had been worked for a year and a day *at Mass time on Sundays*, and then only while he was standing with one foot on a goat's back and the other on the edge of a bath tub.

Goronwy Bebyr immediately set about forging the required weapon. A year and a day later, with the spear ready, Blodeuedd managed to convince Lleu Llaw Gyffes to demonstrate to her the ridiculous position he would need to adopt to be killed.

As he took up the stance, Goronwy Bebyr rose from his hiding place in some nearby bushes, but managed only to wound Lleu Llaw Gyffes, who changed into an eagle and flew away to die from his injury.

Gwydion fab Dôn tracked down Lleu Llaw Gyffes by following a sow that fed on the maggots that dropped from the eagle's festering wound.

After a long search, Gwydion fab Dôn found the dying hero perched in the branches of a tree, restored him to human form and healed his wounds.

Math fab Mathonwy and Gwydion fab Dôn then set out to avenge Lleu Llaw Gyffes.

When they found Blodeuedd, Gwydion fab Dôn turned her into an owl, the bird of the night.

*Arianrhod is the ruler of Caer Siddi, or Caer Feddwidd, also called the Fort of Carousal, a paradisial otherworldly realm in the north, in which a fountain runs with wine and no one ever knows illness or old age.*

*It was visited by King Arthur and Taliesin.*

## XVIII. Bendigeidfran Vran (Brân the Blessed) and Branwen

**Bendigeidfran Vran**, also known as Brân Fendigaid, literally "Blessed Raven," the giant son of the Welsh sea god Llyr and Iweriadd, the personification of Ireland; he was of enormous size and commensurate strength and possessed supernatural powers... In addition, he was god of fertility and patron of craftsmen, a warrior, skilled harpist and a poet.

When the Irish High King **Matholwch** came to Bendigeidfran Vran's court at *Harlech in Wales* it was agreed that his sister **Branwen** should marry Matholwch.

But her half-brother **Efnisien** was not consulted and, feeling insulted because of this slight, Efnisien cut off the lips, ears and tails of Matholwch's horses during the wedding feast.

Not unnaturally, hostilities almost broke out between the Irish and the Britons as a result,

<sup>55</sup> A Welsh hero god who is, perhaps, a degenerative version of the Irish Lugh, and who is, curiously enough, depicted as being a cobbler.

but Bendigeidfran Vran managed to avoid a war by presenting Matholwch with replacement horses and a magic cauldron. This otherworld vessel could restore to life the dead but with one small imperfection - they came back to life without the power of speech.



Branwen - Celtic (Irish)Goddess of love and beauty. The sister of Bran the Blessed and Manannan mac Lir, daughter of Lir, and wife of the Irish king Matholwch. Died of a broken heart after Bran's death. Known as Venus of the Northern Seas

Matholwch returned to Ireland with Branwen, who was at first received with great rejoicing for she was generous with gifts. Before long she gave Matholwch a son and heir, **Gwern**.

Back in Ireland, Matholwch was unable to convince his warriors that Bendigeidfran Vran's gift was adequate compensation for the damage done to the horses.

To satisfy his friends and family, Matholwch insisted that Branwen relinquish her position as Irish queen and be made to work as a lowly cook in the palace kitchens.

During the next three years, as Branwen worked in the palace kitchens, she reared a starling and taught it to recognize her brother Bendigeidfran Vran. Then she sent it across the sea with a letter tied to its leg, telling of her treatment.

When Bendigeidfran Vran and the Britons learned of how Branwen was being treated, Bendigeidfran Vran raised a great army and sailed to Ireland to fight with Matholwch.

Bendigeidfran Vran left his son *Caradawc* as chief steward... Bendigeidfran Vran waded across the Irish Sea by walking on the seabed, his body like a mountain, his two eyes lakes on either side of a ridge which was his nose. When he laid himself down across a river a whole army could march across his back.

Once in Ireland a mighty battle ensued. At first the forces of Matholwch held the upper hand,

for every night they took their dead and wounded and placed them in the magic cauldron that Bendigeidfran Vran had given Matholwch, an act that restored them to full health and vigour.

It was fortunate for Bendigeidfran Vran that his half-brother came, because Efnisien foiled a cunning trap that had been laid for the Britons by Matholwch in his hall.

He had placed behind each of Bendigeidfran Vran's strongest warriors a sack hung from the wall containing an armed Irishman, and at a signal they were to fall upon the Britons during what was supposed to be a feast of welcome.

When Efnisien inspected the hall beforehand, he asked what was in one of the bags.

On being told it was corn, Efnisien took hold of the sack and felt about till his fingers closed on the head of the warrior within it, then he squeezed and cracked his skull.

One by one Efnisien asked about the contents of the sacks and each time repeated his squeezing.

The feast took place therefore not as Matholwch had planned.

Matholwch suggested a compromise to settle the quarrel. He proposed that Gwern though only three, should be placed on the Irish throne.

An even more unexpected turn of events occurred when Efnisien tossed Matholwch's three-year-old son Gwern into a fire.

Branwen would have leapt after her son, but Bendigeidfran Vran held her back.

In the fight that took place afterwards the Britons were almost defeated by the magic cauldron that Bendigeidfran Vran had given Matholwch,

because at night it restored to life the Irish warriors who had been slain during the day.

The Britons were in a desperate predicament and so Efnisien, at the cost of his life, destroyed the magic cauldron.

He hid among the Irish dead and was thrown into the boiling cauldron, where he stretched and burst its sides, but the great effort involved killed him.

In the ensuing battle the Britons exterminated the entire Irish population, except for five pregnant women who hid in a cave.

The resulting children of became the forefathers of the new Irish race. So fierce was the fighting that only seven of their own army survived to return to Wales.

The seven survivors of the expedition were Pryderi, Manawydan fab Llyr, Glieu, Taliesin, Ynawag, Gruddie and Heilyn.

In the final battle with Matholwch, Bendigeidfran Vran was mortally wounded in the foot with *a poisoned arrow*.

On his deathbed, realizing he was dying, Bendigeidfran Vran ordered his head to be cut off and to be taken by the seven to Bryn Gwyn<sup>56</sup> in London.

Bendigeidfran Vran also told the seven that they would be a long time traveling to their goal, adding that his head would be pleasant company for them during their long journey.

For seven years, he told them, they would remain in *Harlech*, where they would feast in splendor while bring detained by the magical singing of *the birds of Rhiannon*.

<sup>56</sup> Bryn Gwyn, the White Mount, is one of the most important pagan sites in London; it is the location of the burial of the severed head of Bendigeidfran Vran. The head was buried with its face towards France so that it would forever act as a magical guardian of the country. Later, King Arthur dug it up because he wanted to be the sole guardian of Britain. It is one of the four major Druidic sites of London, and it is also the burial place of the founder of London, Brutus, as well as the fifteenth century BC monarch Molmutius. Today, little is actually visible of the White Mount, for the Tower of London was built on it. The translation of Bendigeidfran Vran's name as "raven" is particularly significant when the presence of ravens at the Tower of London is considered. These ravens, sacred birds to the Celts, are never permitted to leave the confines of the Tower of London, for if they do, so it is said, the White Tower will fall into ruin and Britain will fall to invaders. Today, the birds have their wings clipped.

He told them that they would live in *Penvro*<sup>57</sup> for a total of eighty years, the severed and uncorrupted head of Bendigeidfran Vran keeping them company, only leaving after Heilyn had opened a door that looked towards Cornwall.

At once, all seven were filled with memories of all that had befallen their fellow countrymen and left to continue their journey to London where they fulfilled the last orders of Bendigeidfran Vran. His head could still eat and talk during the voyage home. The head was brought to London and buried facing the continent as protection against invaders - a magical guardian over Britain.



When news of Bendigeidfran Vran's death arrived, *Caradawc* was overthrown by *Caswallawn*, son of the death god *Beli*.

Unfortunate Branwen, whom the seven brought home with them, looked back towards Ireland and, thinking about the destruction that had been brought about for her sake, died of a broken heart. She was buried on the banks of the River *Alaw* on Anglesey,<sup>58</sup> her grave being known as *Bedd Branwen*.<sup>59</sup>

*King Arthur is said to have used the head of Bendigeidfran Vran for its power.*<sup>60</sup>

## XIX. Oisín

### I

**Oisín**, sometimes Ossian, whose name means "Little Fawn," was the son of Fionn mac Cumhaill, the great leader of the Fianna, popularly known as the Fenians, the body guard of the High King. Oisín was the greatest poet in Ireland, perhaps not a surprising achievement considering how as a young man his father had eaten the *Salmon of Knowledge*.

Oisín's mother was the goddess **Saar**, or Sabia, the granddaughter of the Dagda. This made **Oghma**, the god of eloquence, Oisín's uncle.

Saar had been placed under a powerful spell by *an maleficent druid* to live much of her life as a deer.

### II

One day, as Fionn mac Cumhaill with his companions and dogs was returning homewards, a beautiful deer started up on their path and the ensuing chase took them towards Tara, the Irish capital and base of the Fenians.

<sup>57</sup> An ancient name for Pembroke, the location of Gwales.

<sup>58</sup> A large island off the northwest coast of Wales, separated from the mainland by the Menai Straits.

<sup>59</sup> The burial chamber beneath this cromlech was excavated in 1813 and an urn containing the cremated bones of a woman was discovered.

<sup>60</sup> The Celts believed that heads were the seat of the soul, which may partially explain their practice of head-hunting.

At last the exhausted animal stopped and crouched down on the ground, but instead of attacking their quarry the hounds began to play around her, and even lick her head and limbs. So Fionn mac Cumhaill ordered that no harm should be done to the deer, which followed them on the way home until sunset.

The same night Fionn mac Cumhaill awoke to find the most beautiful woman he had ever seen standing next to his bed. It was Saar. She explained how a spell had been placed upon her, but that she had learned that if Fionn mac Cumhaill came to love her, then all the enchantments would cease to have power and she could resume her normal shape.

So it came to pass that Saar lived with Fionn mac Cumhaill as his mistress, and for months neither of them stirred from their dwelling.

Then news arrived of invaders in ships off *Dublin* - most likely a Viking raid - and the Fenians were called to arms.

For only one week Fionn mac Cumhaill was absent dealing with the Vikings.

On his return, however, he discovered that Saar had been lured away by *the evil druid* disguised as himself - a common trick among shape-changers.

Realizing that it must be the enchanter whom Saar had rejected, Fionn mac Cumhaill organized a search of every remote hill, valley and forest in the country, but without success.

Eventually he gave up all hope of finding his mistress and returned to his pleasure of hunting.

It happened, by chance, that his dogs tracked down a very strange quarry and Fionn mac Cumhaill came upon them surrounding a naked boy with long hair.

His two best hounds were, in fact, keeping the pack from seizing the child.



Having driven off the dogs, Fionn mac Cumhaill and the other huntsmen regarded the boy with curiosity.

He told them that he did not know the identity of his father, but that his mother was a gentle hind, with whom he lived in a quiet valley safely shut in by steep cliffs.

To their home a tall, dark stranger came every now and again to see his mother,

but she always shrank away in fear and the man left in anger.

When the stranger finally struck her with a magic hazel wand, the hind was forced to follow him,

although she tried to comfort her son as she left.

From his tiny forehead grew a tuft of deer hair where Saar had licked the boy.

As soon as the boy finished this account, Fionn mac Cumhaill embraced him as his own son by Saar, and immediately named him Oisín ("Little Fawn").

He was trained as a Fenian warrior, which involved one of the most difficult courses of training imaginable, and became a skilled fighter like his father, but he also inherited the gentler ability of eloquence from his mother, and his songs and poetry were admired throughout Ireland.

### III

One summer morning, when Oisín and many members of the Fian were hunting on the shores of *Loch Lena*, they saw a beautiful maiden suddenly appear, riding a pure white stallion with silver hooves and a golden mane, and coming towards them.

Thus, Oisín met **Niamh of the Golden Hair**, the daughter of the King of Tír inna mBam. Niamh told Oisín how she had traveled a great distance to invite him to her father's otherworld realm, the *Land of Promise*. She cast a spell on Oisín so that he fell in love with her, and the two of them readily mounted the magic steed and rode back to her land, where they were married and lived happily together. He was never seen by his father again. Niamh bore the poet a daughter named *Plur nam Ban* ("Flower of Woman").



Niamh of the Golden Hair

Oisín became the king of Tír inna mBam after winning a foot race against Niamh's father.

In the otherworld kingdom Oisín fought against a Fomhoiré giant in an undersea combat worthy of his father - *and rescued the daughter of the King of Tír inna mBam*.

But after a number of other exploits Oisín began to miss his own land of Ireland.

Niamh tried to dissuade him, but, finding he would not change his mind, she gave him her magic horse so that he could visit his home, warning him not to dismount otherwise he would never be allowed to return.

When Oisín arrived back in Ireland, it appeared to Oisín almost a strange land, bleak and cold, for everyone he knew had died long before.

The Fian were long forgotten, and a new faith was now practiced.

The people seemed far sadder and more careworn than the heroes he had grown up with.

Disheartened, Oisín returned to his supernatural wife, Niamh, but on the way, by chance he came upon a ragged group of men attempting to move a boulder, which he easily lifted for them while still seated upon his mount. However, his saddle slipped and he fell to the ground.

In an instant the magic horse vanished and the valiant young warrior was turned into a blind and weary, withered old man, alone and bereft and on the verge of death.

With his lyre he sang [to St. Patrick] of the heroes and gods of his era, conjuring up the phantoms of that bygone age, before he died.



Uffington is the oldest and best known white horse. 374 feet (110m) from end to end. The location is the highest point in Oxfordshire and you have excellent views.



Morrigan by Gynvaelaine

### XX. Brian

**Brian** was one of the sons of Tuirill Bicreo (Tuirenn) *son of Ogmha* and the Morrigan, his own daughter, whose family were engaged in a long-time feud with the family of *Cian*, father of the god Lugh. *Cian* was involved in a long-standing blood feud with the sons of Tuirill Bicreo - Brian and his brothers, Iuchar and Iucharba.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>61</sup> It is thought that the three brothers are, in true Celtic style, really three aspects of the same person, Brian being a form of the Gaulish Brennos, the god to whom the Gauls attributed their success at the battles of Allia and Delphi, whom was mistaken by Roman and Greek chroniclers for a human leader.

When Lugh sent *Cian* to *Ulster* to summon the warriors of the Tuatha Dé Danaan to battle, Brian and his brothers, *Iuchar* and *Iucharba*, intercepted and killed him during his journey. His death was avenged by his son Lugh.

To atone for this act of murder they were given by Lugh eight near-impossible tasks to perform - they were required by the Tuatha Dé Danaan top collect a number of items for the forthcoming Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh. They set off on their perilous mission in *Manannán mac Lir's self-propelled boat*, "Wave Sweeper" across the ocean. Among the objects they had to retrieve were three apples from the Garden of the Sun, which were as large as a baby's head and that could cure all wounds and ailments. Their second task was to obtain a healing pigskin from the king of Greece, that had the same properties. The third was to collect a poisoned spear from the king of Persia, whose point was so hot that it had to be housed in a block of ice. The fourth was to procure a chariot and its horses that could outrun the wind over both land and water. The fifth was to collect the seven magical swine of *King Asal of the Golden Pillars*, which could be cooked and eaten one day and found alive and willing to be eaten the next. The sixth was to obtain a young dog that was so awful it terrified every other beast in the world. The seventh was to collect an inexhaustible cooking-spit belonging to the nymphs of the undersea kingdom on the sunken isle of *Finchor* - *Brian*, in a magical water suit sunk down among 150 maidens and seized the golden spit from the hearth of their underwater castle - Finally, for the last task, they were to shout three times on the Hill of *King Miodhchaoin*, the warrior friend of *Cian*. *Miodhchaoin* was under a bond never to allow any man to raise his voice on the summit of the hill he lived on.



The Voyage of Brân

Having successfully brought back to Lugh all the magical objects he required, they then set out to perform their last duty. When the three sons of Tuirill Bicreo came to the hill as the last of their tasks set them by Lugh as a fine for their murder of *Cian*, they had to fight *Miodhchaoin*, who would not allow them to complete their task. *Miodhchaoin* was killed, but not until he had left each of the three sons of *Tuireann* barely alive. They gave three feeble shouts from the top of the hill so paid their fine to Lugh.

Tuirill Bicreo therefore begged Lugh if he might borrow the magical pigskin and so heal his mortally wounded sons, but the god refused and Brian and his brothers died on the hill.

## XXI. The Voyage of Brân

**Brân**, son of *Febal*, began a great journey when he found a silver branch that was blossoming with scented silver flowers. Gathering his kinsmen together, Brân displayed the magic bough, only to be surprised by the sudden appearance of a woman dressed in otherworldly robes.

She sang a lay to the assembled company of the great wonders to be found in the lands beyond the sea, the otherworld islands, each larger than Ireland, and inhabited by beautiful women who had no knowledge of sorrow, sickness or death.

Happiness, she sang to them, was the lot of all living in these wondrous lands.

Then the strange woman stopped singing and vanished, taking the magic bough with her.

Brân had been unable to hold onto it, even with both hands.

The next day Brân sailed westwards on an epic voyage with twenty-seven kinsmen in search of *Tír inna mBam*, the *Isle of Women*, an otherworldly realm.

Their first encounter was with the sea god Manannán mac Lir, who was driving his chariot across the waves.

Once again the Irish heroes were informed by the sea god of the marvels that awaited them.

Even then the sea appeared to be a plain of flowers, with blossoming shrubs and an orchard of fruitful trees, and the fishes turned into flocks of sheep and the leaping salmon into frisking calves, before driving away over the now solid surface of the sea.

As Manannán mac Lir disappeared the sea returned to normal.

Sailing on, Brân's boat came to the *Isle of Merriment*, where his crew could hardly stand up for laughing, and then in the evening they reached the Isle of Women - where people lived in timeless joy and plenty.

The beautiful women's leader called to Brân to step ashore, but he was afraid to land; however, she threw a ball of thread to Brân which stuck to his hand, and by this magic the boat was drawn from the waves and hauled to the shore.

As soon as they landed, a strange euphoria spread across the adventurers, who were led through *Tír inna mBam* to a great hall, where they found soft beds, a woman for every man and an unlimited supply of delicious foods and drink ready for them.

Soon Brân and his companions had settled into a life of comfort and happiness.

The delightful stay seemed to them to last only for a year, but in fact many years had passed.

When the crew grew homesick and persuaded Brân that it was time that they sailed home, he was warned by the chief woman not to set foot on soil again.

Arriving off the Irish coast, a crowd of people gathered on the shore and called out to the ship, asking his name.

Brân replied, telling them both his name and that of his father.

After a short while they shouted back to him that the only Brân they knew of was from one of their ancient stories...

Brân discovered that nobody recognized him, and he was known only as a legendary figure who had long ago embarked on a great voyage to the otherworlds.

A great apprehension gripped the adventurers, the truth of their absence becoming clear when before one desperate hero forgot the warning and jumped ashore, and the instant his foot touched the beach, his body collapsed in a heap of ash, as though he had been dead for centuries.

They had been absent not just for a year, but for many hundreds of years, and Brân and his companions were as dead men, alive only aboard their ship due to the enchantment of Tír inna mBam.

Brân called out the details of their adventure to the people on the shore, then turned the ship back out to sea and so set sail again, never to be heard of again.

## XXII. Oghma

**Oghma** was the Irish god of eloquence and most famous as the inventor of *Ogham*, the earliest system of writing used in Ireland. *Ogham is made up of a series of vertical or sloping lines inscribed on a base line.*

Oghma, the son of Dagda, "Lord of Knowledge," he was one of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, a strong champion whose magic words could bind men to follow him, a psychopomp,<sup>62</sup> or heroic guide, of the spirits of the dead - responsible for conveying souls to the otherworld. The Celtic otherworld was an inviting place, a delightful and peaceful resting place for the soul prior to its next rebirth in the world.

Oghma was usually given the title Grianaichech, which means "Sun-face."

His consort was the goddess Sirona, whose name means "star."<sup>63</sup>

A father god, who was regarded as a wise elder, Oghma, an old man, carries a club and a bow.<sup>64</sup>



The tip of his tongue is connected by tiny chains to the ears of a throng of happy mortals.

<sup>62</sup> A **psychopomp** is a "spirit" responsible for escorting newly deceased souls from Earth to the afterlife. Their role is not to judge the deceased, but simply provide safe passage. Classical examples of psychopomps are Charron, Hermes and Mercury. In Jungian psychology, the psychopomp is a mediator between the conscious and unconscious realms. It is symbolically personified in dreams as a wise man or woman, or sometimes a helpful animal. In many cultures, the shaman also fulfills the role of psychopomp.

<sup>63</sup> Reminiscent of the major concept that underpins Celtic mythology, the Three Worlds of star, sun and moon.

<sup>64</sup> Oghma is equated with the Greco-Roman Heracles. He was a Herculean figure with massive muscles, a huge club and wearing a lion's skin.

He is not simply a god of brute strength, for he was the god of eloquence - a skill the Celts believed more powerful than force.

Besides having a truly remarkable skill in the binding power of poetry and the poetic word, Oghma was a fighter *like other Irish gods*.



*single-combat*

Oghma married *Etain*, who was the daughter of the god of healing Dian Cécht.

Under the tyrannical rule of Bres, Oghma was humiliatingly made to collect firewood, following the installation of Lugh as the leader of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, and their success over the Fomhoiré in the Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh.

At the second and final battle of Magh Tuireadh Oghma slew *Indechn*, son of the Fomhoiré goddess *Domnu*.

*Indechn* was one of the leaders of the Fomhoiré.

Oghma claimed as his prize a magic Fomhoiré sword that was capable of recounting all the deeds it had preformed.

Oghma was named as one of those who sent to pursue the fleeing remnants of the Fomhoiré forces who were attempting to make off with the magical harp of the Dagda.

## XXIII. Oscar and the Battle of Gabhra

**Oscar** was the son of Oisín and the grandson of Fionn mac Cumhaill. His name means "deer lover" and recalls his grandmother, Saar, whom Fionn mac Cumhaill first encountered while he was hunting: Saar had been changed into a hind by a spell, which Fionn mac Cumhaill briefly lifted.

Oscars mother was *Eibhir*, "a yellow-haired maiden from a warm country."

He killed three kings in his first battle, when he also mistakenly killed his friend Linné.

Oscar proved his might as a warrior by killing a huge boar that none other, including his grandfather, had been able to catch.

He married Aideen, but was soon afterwards killed in the Battle of Gabhra.

Oscar was one of the best of all the Fianna - the warriors who acted as a bodyguard to the High King of Ireland.

*Cairbe*, son of Cormac mac Airt, succeeded his father as High King of Ireland.

The hand of his daughter Sgeimh Solais ("Light of Beauty") was sought by the mysterious King of the Decies.

The Fian then claimed a tribute, which, so they claimed, was customarily paid to them on these occasions, but High King *Cairbre* refused to pay and went to war against the fian.

*Cairbe* felt that the Fenians had too much power, and refused to pay them for their services and raised another band of fighters to replace them - a bloody battle struggle ensued.

In a battle fought at *Gabhra*, near present-day Dublin, the majority of the fian were wiped out;

Oscar killed *Cairbe* in single combat but was himself received mortal wounds from which he quickly died.

Aideen died of grief after the death of her husband... and was buried on *Ben Edar* by Oisín, Oscar's father, who erected a great dolmen that still stands over her grave.

The **Battle of Gabhra** led to the end of the supremacy of the fian within Ireland.

+

Fionn mac Cumhaill returned briefly from the otherworld to mourn Oscar's death.

### Part the Third

#### XXIV. Édáin Echraighe

*i*

**Midhir**, the proud and handsome son of Dagda, the father of the gods, was a god of *Tir Tairngiri*, the otherworldly *Land of Promise*.

Like Manannán mac Lir, he was associated with rebirth.

Unlike his father, a rough, coarse figure, Midhir always appeared as a splendidly dressed young man.

Midhir lived under a mound in the middle of Ireland.

Midhir's first wife was *Fuamhnach*, the daughter of *Béothach*.

She became furious with jealousy when Midhir became besotted with one of the Tuatha Dé Danaan from *Ulster*, **Édáin Echraighe** (*Édáin* the Horse-Riding), the daughter of King Ailill mac Máta, the consort of Medbh, Queen of *Connacht*, and the most beautiful woman in all Ireland.

Her hand was sought on his behalf by Oenghus Mac in Og, his foster-son.

To hinder Midhir's search for her, *Fuamhnach*, with a druid's aid, first turned Édáin Echraighe into a pool of water that turned into a worm,

which in turn turned into a huge and beautiful fly whose perfume and music filled the air,

in order to keep her away from Midhir.

*Fuamhnach* need not have thought that this would be the end of Édáin Echraighe, for Midhir was quite content to have his new wife around him, even in this strange form.

Seething with resentment, *Fuamhnach* conjured up a huge gust of wind, which blew the beautiful fly far away, so that it fell over a cliff to lay helpless on a rocky coastline buffeted by the waves.

There Édáin Echraighe lay helpless for seven years until, at long last, she was discovered by Oenghus Mac in Og, who placed her carefully in a crystal bower

and brought her back to Midhir.

Once again Midhir and Édáin Echraighe had to endure the wrath of *Fuamhnach*, who thought she had seen the last of the girl.

*Fuamhnach* once again magically created a huge gust of wind, which this time blew the fly into a glass of wine, and accidentally swallowed by the wife of *Etar*, an *Ulster* warrior, who became pregnant, and, 10 (some accounts say 12) years after she had first been born, Édáin Echraighe was reborn as a mortal.

*ii*

As Édáin Echraighe reached maturity the second time, *Eochaidh Airemh* became the High King of Ireland.

However, none of his warriors would pay him due respect as he was unmarried, so he sent out messengers to search out the most beautiful woman in Ireland.

When High King *Eochaidh Airemh* was looking for a bride for himself, he eventually heard reports that described Édáin Echraighe as the fairest maiden in Ireland.

So he brought the beautiful former goddess back to his palace at *Tara*, the capital. There the High King *Eochaidh Airemh* and Édáin Echraighe enjoyed a happy married life.

Unaware of her previous existence, Édáin Echraighe was loved by both *Eochaidh Airemh*, whom she married, and by his brother *Ailill Anglonnach*.

News of the marriage and of Édáin Echraighe's uncompromising beauty reached Midhir, who set out to *Tara* to reclaim the girl who could only be the reincarnation of his former, and long lost, second wife.

Meanwhile, Édáin Echraide and *Ailill Anglonnach* arranged a tryst on three occasions, but on each occasion *Ailill Anglonnach* was given a sleeping draught by Midhir.

When Midhir claimed her, Édáin Echraide refused to leave without the consent of her husband, *Eochaíd Airemh*. The High King refused.

Midhir thus challenged High King *Eochaíd Airemh* to a chess contest,<sup>65</sup> but he let the king easily win the opening game and accepted the forfeit of building a great causeway across the bogs of Meath.

Having completed the causeway, Midhir then returned to *Tara* and duly won the final game, claiming as his boon a kiss from Édáin Echraide.

A month later Midhir came to *Tara* to claim his prize, but found all the doors barred to him, for *Eochaíd Airemh* had no intentions of giving up his beautiful wife.

This potentially difficult situation was solved by her sudden discovery that she was already married to Midhir, who had awakened her memories.

As the king sat feasting with his company, Midhir simply, unperturbed, appeared among the company, took hold of Édáin Echraide and together the pair flew out of the smoke hole of the great hall as a pair of white swans.

*Eochaíd Airemh* and his company pursued them to the *sídh* of *Bri Leith* - and began to dig it up.

Midhir appeared to the High King and promised to return Édáin Echraide to him, whereupon he produced fifty identical women, all of whom were the exact likeness of Édáin Echraide. Even though *Eochaíd Airemh* chose carefully, he actually chose his own daughter, *Ess*, by the mortal Édáin. It was quite a considerable time before the king realized his mistake, and by that time Édáin had born the king a son, the hero **Conaire Mór**.

iii

Although she lived once again with Midhir for a period of time, Édáin Echraide decided in the end to return to *Tara* and finish her mortal life as *Eochaíd Airemh*'s queen.

Midhir had to accept in the end that she was the High King's consort and leave her alone.

*Ailill Anglonnach*, however, gradually succumbed to a terrible wasting disease because of his unrequited passion for the new queen.

Édáin Echraide was steadfast in her love for *Eochaíd Airemh*, but she also felt sorry for the ailing *Ailill Anglonnach* and eventually promised to satisfy his desire as the only means of saving his life. It was arranged that they should meet secretly in a house outside *Tara*.

However, *Ailill Anglonnach* never came because he was given a sleeping draught by Midhir and fell into an enchanted sleep.

Only when she recounted what had happened to *Ailill Anglonnach*, was he cured of his illicit love.

+

Midhir also had some difficulty in accepting his father's successors as leaders of the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

<sup>65</sup> The playing of board games in Celtic mythology always signifies the interplay of great forces. It is at once both a magical and a cosmological game, which was to have later parallels in the interaction of the forces of good and evil, right and wrong.

The conflict that he started seems to have had a dangerously weakening effect on this generation of gods just before the invasion of the Milesians, who then went on to defeat the gods.

## XXV. Conaire Mór, High King of Ireland



I

i

### Mess Buachalla

**Nemglan**, the Irish King of the Birds, fell in love with *Mess Buachalla*, a cow-herd's foster daughter and the betrothed of *Eterscel*, High King of Ireland.

She was actually the daughter of Édáin Oig and *Cormac Cond Longus*, king of Ulster.

However, *Cormac Cond Longus* was so disappointed not to have a son that he ordered the baby girl, *Mess Buachalla*, to be thrown into a pit.

*Mess Buachalla*, was saved by two kind-hearted servants, who could not bring themselves to carry out the king's order.

Instead they gave *Mess Buachalla* to a cowherd.

When she grew up, her beauty was so remarkable that *Eterscel*, the High King of Ireland, decided to marry her.

He was also persuaded by a prophecy which said that an obscure woman would bear him a famous son.

ii

### Cormac Cond Longus

*Cormac Cond Longus* was the eldest son of the Ulster king Conchobhar mac Nessa. His foster-father was the deposed Ulster ruler *Fergus mac Róith*.

*Cormac Cond Longus* disagreed with his father's treachery in killing Naoise, the husband of Derdriu, and went into voluntary exile in Connacht with Fergus mac Róith and fought for Ailill mac Máta and Queen Medbh against his father in the *Táin Bó Cuailngé* (*Cattle Raid of Cooley*).

Not until he received an invitation from his father Conchobhar, when the dying king had nominated *Cormac Cond Longus* as his successor, did he consider returning home. However a *druidess* had warned *Cormac Cond Longus* that if he went back to Ulster he would be killed, but he set out anyway on the journey returning home and stopped at a roadside hostel where he was forced to break his *geasa* (*taboos*) and was lulled into a deep magic sleep by the soft notes of a harp. Defenseless in his enchanted sleep, he was slain by a group of assassins, sent by the harpist, *Craiftine*, in revenge for *Cormac Cond Longus*'s affair with his wife, who had fallen in love with *Cormac Cond Longus*.

## II

On the eve of the wedding, Nemglan came to her in a bird's skin with magnificent plumage and seduced her, she gave herself freely and from this union **Conaire Mór** was conceived.

The child was passed off as High King *Eterscel*'s son. The one instruction that Nemglan told *Mess Buachalla* to give their child was that he was never to kill a bird. *Mess Buachalla* was careful to warn the boy that he must never, whatever the circumstances might be, kill a bird.

When Conaire Mór was a young man, *Eterscel* died and the question of the succession was raised in *Tara*, the Irish capital.

It was agreed to follow **the ancient custom of the dream**.

After a feast, one of the court would have a spell of truth sung over him as he slept.

The man the courtier dreamed about would then be the next High King.

In **the succession dream** a naked man was revealed, walking along the road to *Tara* with a sling in his hand.

At his time Conaire Mór was some distance from *Tara*.

It happened one day that Conaire was driving his chariot down this very road when a flock of birds with beautiful plumage descended upon him.

They had such wondrous plumage that Conaire Mór forgot the taboo about killing birds, and forgetting his mother's instruction never to harm any bird, he loaded his sling,

at which point the birds immediately shed their feathers, turned into armed warriors and attacked the charioteer.

But one of the birdlike fighters, who was more handsome than the rest, protected Conaire Mór.

The leader of these incredible warriors, however, introduced himself to Conaire as his real father Nemglan and reminded the young man that he must never cast stones at birds for they were his own kin.

To make up for his misconduct towards the birds, Conaire was told to undress and return home to *Tara* on foot, carrying only his sling.

+

Conaire Mór was burdened by more *geis* (*taboos*) than any other Irish warlord.

Violation of *geis* led to misfortune or death and marked a tragic turning point in the hero's life.

Despite his wisdom, Conaire Mór was lured by his enemies into breaking his *geis* one by one.



Cú Chulainn in Battle.

Cú Chulainn riding his chariot into battle.

He fights from his chariot, driven by his loyal charioteer Láeg and drawn by his horses, Liath Macha and Dub Sainglend.

Gae Bulg was a unique spear owned by the Irish Cuchulainn and was a gift by his mother Aiofe. Translated as "barbed spear" or "belly spear," it was said to have special barbs all along the shaft. When pierced a man's body, the spear's barbs would open up, making it nearly impossible to remove without killing the victim. Gae Bulg was made of the bone of the perished sea monster Coinchenn. Also unique was the fact that the spear was held by the toes, kicked upward, piercing the victim's groin.

## III

So it was that Conaire Mór was received at *Tara* as the High King of Ireland.

Peace and prosperity at first marked his reign, although the lure of plunder gradually drew the Irish back to their old habit of cattle-raiding.

Since Conaire Mór was reluctant to punish severely those who took part in the growing disorder, the country soon slid back into clan warfare.

Eventually, the High King had to forgo the ways of peace and break his promise to his father.

Conaire soon realized that this would bring about his own downfall. While on campaign, he came to a roadside hostel where he was greeted by **three strange horsemen**,

whose clothes, weapons, bodies and horses were all red.

A **hideous old woman** told Conaire Mór that during his stay in the hostel,

"neither skin nor flesh of you will escape from the place to which you have come, save what the birds will take in their claws."

The same night a rebel force surrounded the hostel and attacked.

Three times the building caught fire and three times the flames were brought under control,  
but all the water had now been used.

When a druid accompanying the rebels laid a spell of thirst on the High King, he sent one of his companions to fetch some water. On returning, the warrior saw that the fight was over and Conaire Mór's severed head lay on the floor. So he poured the water into the king's head, at which Conaire Mór's decapitated head praised him for his sense of duty.

## XXVI. Cernunnos, "the Horned One"



**Cernunnos**, the Lord of the Animals, was a deity of Gaulish origin, worshipped in both France and Britain as an animal god and hunter.<sup>66</sup>

He is usually depicted sitting cross-legged and wearing a sleeveless tunic and bead necklace.

He has an impressive pair of antlers, and the name Cernunnos means "the Horned One."

As guardian of the portal leading to the otherworld, a messenger god and the guide of the dead to the underworld.<sup>67</sup>

Cernunnos became associated with wealth and prosperity, although his earlier function had been a nature deity, god of wild animals and the forest,

ruler of the active forces of life and death, regeneration and fertility. He is the god of hunting, culling and taking.

His purpose is to purify through selection and sacrifice in order that the powers of fertility, regeneration and growth may proceed unhindered.

Cernunnos is usually holding a ram-headed serpent in his left hand, while he himself sits, cross-legged.

He has both animal and human ears, and carries a magnificent set of antlers from which hangs a *torc* - sometimes two.

To his right stands a stag<sup>68</sup> whose antlers are comparable to those of the god himself.

<sup>66</sup> His worship was prominent in the areas settled by Belgic tribes that imported him to Britain.

<sup>67</sup> The Romans identified Cernunnos with their god Mercury.

Around him other woodland animals gather.

*The ram-headed serpent, representing the chthonic aspect of Cernunnos, is the totem creature of fire from within the earth - and emblem of power.*

## XXVII. Taliesin

### I

#### Cerridwen and Gwion Bach

##### i

**Cerridwen**, whose name means "White Grain," was a Welsh corn goddess of fertility and wife of Tegid Voel, and the mother of the maiden Creirwy, the fairest woman in the world, her very person radiating light and warmth in contrast to her brother, *Afagddu*, reputedly the ugliest man in the world, whose soul was dark and cold.

Tegid Voel was of gentle lineage, his home being on an island in the middle of Llyn Tegid.<sup>69</sup>

Cerridwen was a crone! the goddess of dark, prophetic powers; a patroness of poetry; her totem animal was the sow, which represents the fecundity of the Otherworld.

She was, through her totem animal, connected with the sow goddess, as well as with Lady Albine<sup>70</sup> and her [ ] sisters.

Cerridwen lived at Caer Siddi, *also known as Caer Feddidd*, the Otherworldly Fort of Carousal in which a fountain runs with wine and no one ever knows illness or old age.

The paradisial realm in the stars - as a spiral - was ruled by Arianrhod.

She also had connection with wolves - *and was the center of a Neolithic cult.*

##### ii

It was as Hên Wen, the "old white one," the sow, that she gave birth to several monstrous offspring that were going to cause untold trouble for Britain, one of which was the Cath Palug, a monstrous member of the cat family, whose name means "clawing cat."

Cath Palug was thrown into the sea at Penryn Awstin from whence it was saved and raised by the sons of Palug on Anglesey, where it grew to an enormous size and proceeded to devour at least 180 warriors.

Cei traveled to Anglesey with a view to killing lions and especially prepared himself for a meeting with the Cath Palug - *and defeated this animal.*

<sup>68</sup> The stag was, according to Celtic tradition, the oldest of animals, and it played a major role in their culture as an Otherworld creature, luring hunters into the tangled masses of the forests, the land of the gods, where it would allow itself to be eaten and then resurrected.

<sup>69</sup> **Llyn Tegid** - the largest natural lake in Wales. Local people use to draw their water from a well that had to be capped after use. One night, however, the well-keeper neglected his duties, and the well gushed out its water while the local people slept. By morning, having had to flee their houses in the night, the local people looked down from the surrounding hills to see a lake some 3 miles long and 1 mile wide. Today Llyn Tegid is 5 miles long, and local belief holds that it will continue to grow.

<sup>70</sup> **Lady Albine** and her [ ] sisters came to the island that was to be named Albion in her honour, having been banished from their own country for killing their husbands. This story has a parallel in the classical Greek myth of the fifty Danaides, the daughters of Danaus, who killed their husbands, the fifty sons of Aegyptus, on their wedding night.



The powerful, shape-changing Cerridwen with her cauldron, putting a spell on the contents to make her ugly son Afagdu at least wise and erudite.

### iii

Cerridwen was the keeper of the cauldron of the Otherworld, in which inspiration and divine knowledge were brewed... To compensate her ugly son for his misfortune, Cerridwen decided to brew a potion that would empower him with the gifts of inspiration and knowledge and would give him the ability to know all things past, present and future. Collecting together the magical herbs required, she placed them in her cauldron and set *Gwion Bach*, the tiny son of Gwreang, to watch over the pot.

*Gwion Bach* stirred the **cauldron of knowledge** for a year and a day - so that it would yield three drops of Inspiration and Science. And the blind man Morda stoked the fire. Cerridwen ordered them never to cease with their allotted task or they would have her to answer to.

Every day Cerridwen added more herbs to the brew.

Whosoever swallowed these precious drops would know all the secrets of the past, the present and the future. *Afagddu* could become wise and respected!

But *Afagddu* was denied the prophetic gift when a drop of the hot liquid fell on *Gwion Bach's* finger and he unthinkingly sucked the "greal" to relieve the pain,<sup>71</sup> and thus ingested the full potency of the brew - and immediately knew all that had passed and all that was to happen in the future. The knowledge filled him with dread, for it told him that, having ingested the potency of the brew, Cerridwen would kill him. The cauldron then split in two and the remainder of the potion, poisonous now that the three divine drops had been produced, ran into a stream and poisoned the horses of *Gwyddno Garanhir*.<sup>72</sup>

After *Gwion Bach* ran away, Cerridwen at first blamed Morda and beat him so hard over the head with a log that one eye fell out onto his cheek.

When Morda protested his innocence, Cerridwen stopped and saw that he was telling the truth, for it had been *Gwion Bach* who had spoiled her work.

The furious Cerridwen employed all her magic powers to pursue the boy and soon started to gain on the boy.

Sensing her approach, he first transformed himself into a hare in order to be able to run faster,

but Cerridwen countered by becoming a greyhound.

*Gwion Bach* leapt into the air, dove into a river and became a salmon, but the hag followed assuming the form of an otter.

*Gwion Bach* rose out of the river as a bird, but Cerridwen followed as a hawk.

Finally, *Gwion Bach* settled on the threshing floor and became one of the thousands of grains lying there, but even there he was not safe, for the witch became a hen and soon after swallowed him.

Cerridwen soon found that she was pregnant and nine months later *Gwion Bach* was reborn as a beautiful baby boy.

Cerridwen could not bring herself to kill him, so she placed him in a leather bag and threw into the sea.

He was caught in a fish-trap by Elphin son of *Gwyddno Garanhir*. The first thing he saw as he opened the bag was the baby's forehead, at which he exclaimed "Taliesin," which means " Shining Brow."

Thus the child received his name.

**Taliesin** studied the Druidic arts and, filled with inspiration, composed poetry as the greatest of all Welsh bards.

Cerridwen had another equally ugly son, *Morfran ab Tegid*, who was also a fearsome warrior.

He fought with King Arthur in his last battle, at Camlan. At first none of Sir Modred's men would not fight *Morfran* because they thought he was ugly enough to be a devil.

### II

#### Taliesin



<sup>71</sup> Much like **Fionn mac Cumhaill** when he was cooking *the Salmon of Knowledge*.

<sup>72</sup> **Gwyddno Garanhir** possessed a fish-weir that yielded many salmon. He also owned a *mwys*, or basket, which could feed one hundred people at a time. His basket was one of the *thirteen treasures of Britain*.

*i*

**Taliesin** was a Welsh wizard and bard and the first to acquire the skill of prophecy.  
The prophetic poet and shamanistic seer was gifted with all-knowing vision...  
at the age of thirteen, he already surpassed all of Arthur's bards in spiritual insight.  
A visionary spirit at one with the forces of nature.  
"I am old, I am new," he said. "I have been dead, I have been alive."

*ii*

Taliesin became famed for his poetic prowess.  
Urien of Rheged was once poetically addressed by Taliesin... Rheged was a Brythonic kingdom in the northwest of England.  
Urien was assassinated by a former ally, possibly around 590, after he had defeated the Bernicians.  
Urien was the father of Owain by the daughter of , and of three sons named Riwallawn, Run and Pascan.

Taliesin numbers among the seven survivors of the expedition led by Bendigeid Vran to Ireland against King Matholwch.

Taliesin was a contemporary of Myrddin Emrys...

+

He foretold the coming of the Saxons and the oppression of *Cymry* as well as his own death.  
He could appear as an eagle, the bird chosen by shamans on their spirit-flights or trance journeys to the otherworld.  
Taliesin's eagle had a gold nimbus symbolic of his radiant brow.

*iii*

Taliesin had a son named Addaon, who was noted for his wisdom. Addaon was subsequently killed by Llongad Grwrn Fargod Eidyn.

## XXVIII. Cormac mac Art

*i*



*Art son of Conn*

**Art** was the son of *Conn Céchathlach of the Hundred Battles* - a legendary king who reigned in prehistoric times.

*Conn Céchathlach* was the son of Crear, the son of Cis, the son of Carmac, the son of Carruin.

Art was the father of Aodh and grandfather of the Dagda, who is called Dugal the Brown.

One day, while *Conn Céchathlach* stood on the ramparts of *Tara* with his druids and filidh, a horseman approached out of the swirling mists and invited the company to visit his home. The horseman led them to Magh Mell, an Otherworldly realm, whose name means "The Delightful Plain." It is paradisial land of the righteous dead. There, in a house built next to a golden tree and having a golden ridge pole, they found the god Lugh and the Sovereignty of Ireland. Beside the deities, there was a golden bowl and cup, and a silver vat. As the vision faded, these items remained, and *Conn Céchathlach* returned to *Tara* with the godly gifts.

*Connla*, the son of *Conn Céchathlach*, fell in love with an Otherworldly maiden who came from *Tír na mBéo*, the Land of the Living, where sickness and old age were unknown and where the people perpetually feasted.

*Connla* went to live with her there and became a king and was never seen again.



*Conn Céchathlach's* jealous mistress, the goddess *Bécuma Cneisgel*, contrived to send Art off in search of *Delbchaem* ("Fair Shape").

*Bécuma Cneisgel* was an enchantress who had been banished by the Tuatha Dé Danaan for seducing the son of Manannán mac Lir.

She later returned and caused *Conn Céchathlach* to exile his son Art, and then lived with the king for a year during which time no corn grew and no cows gave milk.

*Conn Céchathlach's* advisors told him that the sacrifice of a son of a "sinless couple" would be needed to break the enchantment of *Bécuma*.

Just such a child was found, but his mother arrived with a wondrous cow that was accepted in the child's place.

*Bécuma Cneisgel* now turned her attentions to Art, but left the Tuatha Dé Danaan forever after.

Art confronted an army of savage and venomous giant toads on his perilous journey through the *Land of Wonder*.

After facing untold dangers, he managed to find and rescue *Delbhaem*.  
He returned triumphant and *Bécuma Cneisgel* left *Tara* in disgust.  
Art's son by another woman was **Cormac mac Airt**.  
Art was killed by the rebel *Lugaide mac Con* in the *Battle of Moy Muchruinne*.

*ii*

### *Cormac mac Airt*

Cormac mac Airt was the High King of Ireland during the period that Fionn mac Cumhaill led the Fenian warrior band. He ascended to the throne after having his predecessor Mac Con stabbed. He was not able to become king immediately, however, because a relative of Mac Con had set fire to his hair, and he had to wait for it to grow again. He was the most famous of the early rulers of Ireland, *his reign being tentatively dated from 227 to 266.*

Cormac mac Airt was lured to visit *Tír Tairngiri* by Manannán mac Lir, who assumed the guise of a warrior and appeared to the king so disguised on May Day morning as the king stood on the ramparts of *Tara*. Manannán mac Lir told the king that he came from a realm where decay, falsehood, old age and death were unknown. So entranced was Cormac mac Airt with the warrior's description that he readily agreed to exchange three wishes with the stranger for a bough of three golden apples that produced a healing music when shaken.

Exactly a year later Manannán mac Lir reappeared to claim his three wishes, and in so doing stole away with Cormac mac Airt's wife and family. The king set off in hot pursuit, even though he had no idea where he was heading. *En route* he was overtaken by a strange, thick mist, which seemed to guide him. As it cleared, Cormac mac Airt came to a wondrous palace standing in the middle of a beautiful plain. Entering, he was entertained by a handsome warrior and a charming girl to whom he told his story and of the loss of his wife and children. Lulled to sleep by the wonderful singing of the warrior, Cormac mac Airt awoke the following morning to find his wife and children restored to him.

The warrior then revealed himself as Manannán mac Lir, saying that he had lured the king to *Tír Tairngiri* to reward him, upon which he gave Cormac mac Airt a wonderful golden cup. Next morning Cormac mac Airt, his wife, and his children awoke to find themselves lying on the grass outside their home at *Tara*. Beside them were the golden apples and the cup presented to him by Manannán mac Lir. This cup would break into three pieces if three lies were spoken over it, but three truths told over the pieces would make it whole again. It is this cup that led to the wisdom of Cormac mac Airt...

Cormac mac Airt was the Irish Solomon, a wise and powerful king, who was well served by the exploits of Fionn mac Cumhaill. His wisdom impressed the Tuatha Dé Danaan, who invited him to their home in the otherworld, where they gave him wonderful presents.

One of these was a silver branch that bore golden apples, and when shaken produced music that could cure the sick and wounded. On his own death Cormac mac Airt had to hand back this incredible talisman - and his wonderful golden cup disappeared. He died after a salmon bone caught in his throat, and he was buried at *Religh na Rígh* - the royal cemetery of the historical kings of Ireland. It is located at *Ráth Cruachan*.

\* \* \*

One of Cormac's sons, *Cellach*, raped the niece of Oenghus Mac in Og of the Terrible Spear. In the evening fight, *Cellach* was slain and Cormac lost an eye. As a High King could have no imperfection Cormac had to step down and his son *Cairbe* took his place.

### **XXIX. Conall**

*i*

**Aife**, sometimes known as Aoife, was the daughter of *Ard-Greimne* and an Irish warrior-princess in the *Land of Shadows*, an otherworld kingdom. Her sister *Scathach* instructed the *Ulster* hero **Cú Chulainn** in the arts of war. But when the sisters went to war, Scathach was frightened to take the hero with her into battle in case Aife killed him. Undeterred by Aife's reputation as the fiercest and strongest warrior in the world, Cú Chulainn challenged her to single combat. Before the fight took place, Cú Chulainn asked Scathach what Aife loved best and Scathach told him that above all else she treasured her chariot. Although at one point in the fight Aife shattered his sword and appeared to have the upper hand. At first the combat went as expected in Aife's favour, but Cú Chulainn distracted her attention at a critical moment by calling out that her chariot horse was in trouble. Cú Chulainn then took Aife as his concubine, and after he had returned to Ireland she bore him a son, **Conall**, or Conláí.



The Amazon, Scathach *sister of Aoife*, educating Conall in the "Art of War."

Conall was the doomed son of the great *Ulster* hero Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn had visited the *Land of Shadows* in order to challenge the warrior woman Aife to single combat. After the fight, which Cú Chulainn just managed to win by the use of cunning, they became lovers and Conall was conceived. Conall grew up in *Skye*,<sup>73</sup> a stranger to his father. - It was, however, the boys fate to be killed by his father. Under the tutorage of Scáthach, Conall grew up to be a mighty warrior and sorcerer.

Finally, he was sent to Ireland to search for his father with strict instructions that he should not reveal his true identity to any who challenged him. As Conall approached the coast of Ireland in his bronze boat [ ] the heroes of that land were so amazed by his magical deeds...

When he had left, Cú Chulainn had given Aife a gold ring. Conall wore this *very* ring on a visit to *Ulster*, where he challenged the local heroes to combat. They sent a champion, Conall Cernach, the son of Amhairghin the fili, to challenge the newcomer

Just like his father, Conall was quick to anger and soon overcame Conall Cernach, Cú Chulainn's foster-father. Cú Chulainn could not resist fighting the young stranger himself, despite the misgivings of his wife Emer, who warned him that the boy could only be his own son. Too proud to announce his own identity when challenged by Cú Chulainn, Conall accepted the possibility of death and drew his sword. Although Cú Chulainn was impressed by sword-play that matched his own, he lost his temper at the moment Conall cut off one of his locks of hair. They fought long and hard, the terrible combat only ended when Cú Chulainn drove his spear through Conall's stomach. Only then did Cú Chulainn notice on his young opponent's finger the gold ring that he had given to Aife. Cú Chulainn, overwhelmed with remorse and grief, carried the dying Conall to his house and afterwards buried his forgotten son.

### XXX. Iubdan

**Iubdan**, the elfin ruler of the Wee Folk of the realm of Faylinn, was inclined to boast a lot of his greatness, thinking his warriors to be the strongest of all living beings. To put a stop to this annoying habit, Eisirt, the fili of Iubdan, cut him down to size by insisting that far greater men lived in *Ulster*, a veritable race of giants, of which but a single man could destroy an entire battalion of the people of Faylinn. Iubdan refused to believe this. Eisirt was clasped in irons for his audacity at challenging the power of the people of Faylinn, whose warriors were able to fell a thistle with a single stroke... Eisirt said that he would gather proof for his king, and was sent on his way. He later returned from the court of *Ferghus mac Leda* with Aeda, a dwarf, the fili of the court of that king. Even though he was smaller than the average four-year-old child, Aeda caused panic, for to the inhabitants of Faylinn he was a veritable giant. Eisirt now placed Iubdan under a bond to travel to *Ulster* and see for himself.

To prove his valour, King Iubdan and his wife *Queen Bebo*, ventured off in secret to the dun of the "giant," *Ferghus mac Leda*, vassal king of *Ulster* and a contemporary of Conchobhar mac Nessa. Unfortunately, Iubdan fell into his porridge and, along with his wife, was taken prisoner by *Fergus*. No ransom offer proved acceptable to the king of *Ulster*, although the tiny people offered him an abundant crop of corn.



Iubdan

So, led by Eusurt, the wee people of Faylinn went on the offensive against the men of *Ulster*, and plagued their land: milk became scarce, rivers and wells were made foul and polluted, mills burned and during the nights the hair of men and women was entirely cut off. Still *Ferghus mac Leda* would not release his tiny captives, but agreed to ransom them against some of the finest of all the treasures of Faylinn. After a year and a day of this harassment *Ferghus mac Leda* eventually agreed to release Iubdan and Bebo, but only on condition that in return he was given the king's most valuable and treasured possession, a pair of magic shoes. Whoever wore these shoes was able to travel across the surface of water as if walking on dry land, and when *Ferghus mac Leda* put them on they grew to fit his feet exactly. *Ferghus mac Leda* was also presented with a cauldron that could never be emptied, and a harp that played itself.

### XXXI. Fraoch

**Fraoch** ("wrath" or "fury"), the son of Bébind, who was a goddess and the sister of the river goddess Boann, was loved by *Findbhair*, the daughter of Ailill mac Máta and Medbh of Connacht. Fraoch traveled to see her with a vast hoard of treasure for her parents. Fraoch was entertained regally until he asked Ailill and Medbh to allow him to marry their daughter. Fearing Fraoch's divine parentage, they refused and thought of a way to kill him so that he did not seek to bring divine retribution upon them.

While Fraoch was swimming in a lake, Ailill mac Máta had him fetch a branch from a rowan tree that hung over the water. On the second trip to the tree the fearsome guardian monster of the tree attacked Fraoch, but, although he was horribly wounded, he managed to behead the beast with the sword his beloved *Findbhair* threw him. Fraoch was carried back to the sídh of his mother, from whence he appeared the following day fully healed.

<sup>73</sup> *Skye* or the Isle of Skye is the largest and most northerly island in the Inner Hebrides of Scotland.

His mother Bébind nursed him back to health so that he could claim the hand of *Findbhair*.  
 Aill mac Máta and Medbh could not refuse him now, and agreed to the betrothal  
 on the condition that Fraoch help them in the coming battle with  
*Ulster* to secure the Donn Cualingè.  
 During the course of this battle Medbh offered *Findbhair* to Ferdiadd as his wife, even though by this time shew was married to Fraoch, although she may have been widowed... *for it is unknown what happened to Fraoch.*

### XXXII. Eithne

*Roc* was a smith who helped repair and manufacture the weapons of the Tuatha Dé Danaan.  
*Roc* had a tryst with the mother of Diarmaid ua Duibhne and conceived with her a son who was killed by Dónn, Diarmaid ua Duibhne's father.  
*Roc* discovered the dead boy and cast a Druidic spell over him so that he arose in the form of a monstrous boar, having no ears or tail, the Beann Ghulban, which he placed under bond to kill Diarmaid ua Duibhne, his foster-brother.

**Eithne** was the daughter of *Roc*, steward of Elcmar, who remained in service after the love god Oenghus Mac in Og had taken the sídh of Brugh na Bóinne.  
 At the same time as she was born, Curcog was born to Manannán mac Lir who sent his daughter to be fostered by Oenghus Mac in Og.  
 Eithne later acted as maid to the daughter of Manannán mac Lir.  
 Eithne grew up into a beautiful young lady, but one day it was discovered that a chieftain of the Tuatha Due Danaan tried to rape her,  
 she refused to eat or drink - *and instead was sustained by an angel of God.*  
 Oenghus Mac in Og and Manannan searched for a remedy and found two sacred cows in a foreign land, whose milk never ran dry and, since they had nothing to do with the Tuatha Dé Danaan, Eithne was thenceforth sustained on their milk.

Eithne continued to thrive in this manner for 1500 years until she was christened by St. Patrick, and subsequently, died in that saint's arms  
 after he had administered the last rites to her.

### XXXIII. Cliodhna



**Cliodhna**, Queen of the Banshees, was an otherworld goddess of beauty - the most beautiful woman in the world.

Cliodhna ruled over the *sidheog* (*fairy women of the hills*) of South Munster, or Desmond.  
 A divine maiden who is accompanied by three brightly coloured magical birds,  
 whose song was so sweet as to soothe the sick and wounded to sleep and cure them;  
 these magical birds fed on the fruit of the apple trees of the *Land of Promise*, Tír Tairngiri.

Cliodhna was passionately in love with a mortal named *Ciabhán*, one of the Fian, a youth with wonderful curling locks.  
 One day on the shore near Cork, while *Ciabhán* went hunting inland, Cliodhna was put into a magic sleep by the music played by a minstrel of the sea god Manannán mac Lir, who then sent a wave to pull her back to the Land of Promise.<sup>74</sup>

*Ciabhán* journeyed over the sea to the land of Manannán mac Lir with Lodan, the son of Lir and brother of Manannán mac Lir, and Eolus.

There they persuaded the sisters Cliodhna, Aeife and Edaein to elope with them, Cliodhna traveling with *Ciabhán*. They had just reached the shore when a huge wave sent after them by Manannán mac Lir rolled in and engulfed the boat the lovers were traveling in, drowning the three men, as well as Ildáthach and his sons who, himself in love with Cliodhna, had set off in pursuit of her; but, rather than drowning the three sisters, the wave simply carried them back to the land of Manannán mac Lir - the realm of Tír Tairngiri.

Cliodhna eloped with Iuchna, a mortal, as the emissary for Oenghus Mac in Og, who was in love with her.

### XXXIV. Abara



<sup>74</sup> In County Cork the tide there is known as Tonn Cliodhna (Cliodhna's Wave).

**Abarta**, which probably means "doer of deeds," was one of the Tuatha Dé Danaan. He was *also known as* "Performer of the Feast."

He was the son of King [ ] of Tír Tairngiri, the Land of Promise. He was an ambitious and mischievous god. He was ruler over the power of jealousy and teamwork.

Abarta wanted to be a Chief Warrior... but thanks to his cruel and mischievous nature, he was not able to achieve this.

Shortly after Fionn mac Cumhaill had succeeded his father as leader of the Fianna, Abarta appeared at *Raith Amu* ("Fort of Almain") on *Allen Hill*, where the camp of Fionn mac Cumhaill was located; his goal was to join the warrior elite.

To get close to the camp without being recognized, he pretended to be a lazy man that was looking for a job; calling himself *Giolla Deacair* ("slothful fellow"), Abarta offered himself as a servant to Fionn mac Cumhaill, hereditary leader of the Fianna.

As a gesture of goodwill, tricky Abarta presented the Fianna with a wild, grey horse.

Only after great effort did the warriors manage to get a bridle on the animal, and then it refused to move even one hoof when mounted by *Conán Maol "the Bald"*, the brother of *Goll mac Morna*.

It was not until fourteen warriors had climbed on its powerful back that it would stir at all.

Once Abarta had mounted behind them, it broke immediately into a gallop, even pulling along a fifteenth warrior who was unable to let go of the horse's tail.

Abarta took them to the otherworld, for that was the reason for his appearance on earth.

This wonderful land was the home of the gods and goddesses, and the place where souls briefly rested before rebirth.

The rest of the Fianna, or Fenians, with the help of *Faruach*, Prince of the fanciful kingdom of *Innia*, a druid who could fashion a ship with thee strokes of his magic axe.

*Faruach* fashioned a magic ship to give chase to Abarta's steed.

The best tracker among them was Fionn mac Cumhaill's assistant *Foltor*.

He succeeded in navigating a course to the otherworld for the rescue expedition.

There Abarta was compelled to release the prisoners as well as to run back to Ireland himself holding on to the horse's tail.

Honour being satisfied, the Fenians agreed to a peace with Abarta.

\*

Their eyes shone with rainbow light, bewitching Ruadh, and for nine blissful nights Ruadh slept with all of them before he grew restless again.

The women then informed him that together they would bear him a son.

Although Ruadh promised faithfully to return at the end of his voyage, he unfortunately forgot about his underwater lovers, and they, in their fury, pursued him, kicking the severed head of his son before them...

## XXXVI. Maeldun

**Maeldun**, or Mael Duin, was one of the great Irish voyagers.

Maeldun's father was a chieftain of the *Aran Islands* who attacked the Irish mainland, looted a church and raped a Christian nun.

He was killed shortly by raiders from overseas, *in all likelihood Vikings*.

The nun gave birth to Maeldun and the child was fostered by the local ruler's wife, who was the sister of the unfortunate nun.

It was only when children taunted Maeldun that he was not really well born that his foster-mother took him to see his true mother and his parentage was revealed.

He then set out with three of his foster-brothers to find his father, only to learn that he had been murdered.

## XXXVII. Sir Cynon

**Cynon** was a knight who encountered a black man with one foot and one eye, and bearing a large wooden club.

This Fomhoiré-like fighter, a cousin of the violent and misshapen Irish sea gods, ordered Cynon to go to a fountain and fill with water a silver bowl that he would find there, and then throw the water against a marble slab.

Sir Cynon did as he was instructed and a Black Knight appeared to the sound of thunder and the singing of magic birds.

Sir Cynon then fought the mysterious opponent but was defeated.

*Conán Maol "the Bald"* was renown for his lack of tact and delicacy - but was nonetheless very brave in battle.

In one encounter his skin was striped from his back - and he was healed by the Sidhe putting a sheepskin on his back which he grew into, becoming a part of his own body.

He only grudgingly trusted Fionn mac Cumhaill as leader of the Fianna, and although he gave him his loyalty he retained a deeper loyalty for his own clan.

He was very quarrelsome and was always first into the fray of any fight. His banner had a briar on it because the thorny branch best described his nature.

## XXXIV. Abarta XXXV. Ruadh

**Ruadh** was a voyager whose ship became becalmed off the north coast of Ireland.

When he swam away to find help for his dying crew, he chanced upon a secret island beneath the waves.

On the island there lived none beautiful women who slept on nine bronze beds.

## Part the Fourth



"The Coming of the Sons of Miled,"  
illustration by J. C. Leyendecker  
in T. W. Rolleston's *Myths & Legends of the Celtic Race*, 1911

### XXXIX. The Sons of Míl Éspáine

#### I

The **Sons of Míl Éspáine** were the sixth and final tribal force who came to Ireland. Míl Éspáine was a warlike, aristocratic Gaelic family in Spain, with roots in Scythia, north-west of the Black Sea. Scota (Scotia), the wife of Míl Éspáine, was the daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh Nectonibus. She mothered Míl Éspáine six sons - and had two from another union. They landed in Ireland on *the feast of Bealtaine* under the leadership of **Amhairghin the fili**. They were the first true *Gaels* to inhabit Ireland.

Having defeated the Tuatha Dé Danaan army, the invaders set out for Tara. On the way they met the three goddesses Banbha, Fódla and Ériu... the wives, respectively, of Mac Cuill, Mac Cécht and Mac Gréine.

The invaders promised each goddess in turn that the land would forever carry her name if she helped them in their cause, but it was only Ériu who countered by saying that Ireland would however belong to their descendants, although she warned the discourteous king, Dónn, that neither he nor his heirs would enjoy the land. Dónn drowned shortly afterwards and was buried on the island Tech Duinn, to which he now welcomes dead warriors. The help, advice and promise of Ériu led the Sons of Míl Éspáine to name the land **Eire**.<sup>75</sup>

At Tara the three Tuatha Dé Danaan kings disputed the right of the invaders to the ownership of the land,

and, as a compromise, they asked Amhairghin the fili to judge each claim.

He ruled that the invaders should put out to sea again beyond a magical boundary referred to as *the ninth wave*.

This they did, but as they turned and tried to return to land the Tuatha Dé Danaan conjured up a great wind to hold them off shore.

Amhairghin called upon the Spirit of Ireland for help, and the wind duly dropped.

The invaders once more landed, and again defeated a Tuatha Dé Danaan army at the *Battle of Tailtu*<sup>76</sup> - here killing Mac Cuill, Mac Cécht and Mac Gréine and so becoming the rulers of Ireland.

Although they had lost the right to rule, the Tuatha Dé Danaan were determined not to be exiled from the land that had been theirs, and so they used their magic to deprive the Sons of Míl Éspáine of milk and corn.

At length the invaders agreed to divide the land between them, the Tuatha Dé Danaan receiving the underground half, and their leader, the Dagda, built a sídh for each of the Tuatha Dé Danaan chiefs and kings.

#### II

**Éber** was the name of two of the three leaders who led the Milesians in their conquest of Ireland.

They were Éber Dónn, or Eber "the Brown," and Éber Finn, or Eber "the Fair."

The third was named Éremón.

Éber Dónn failed to reach the Irish coast because he insulted Ériu and his ship foundered in a storm caused by his bloody war cry.

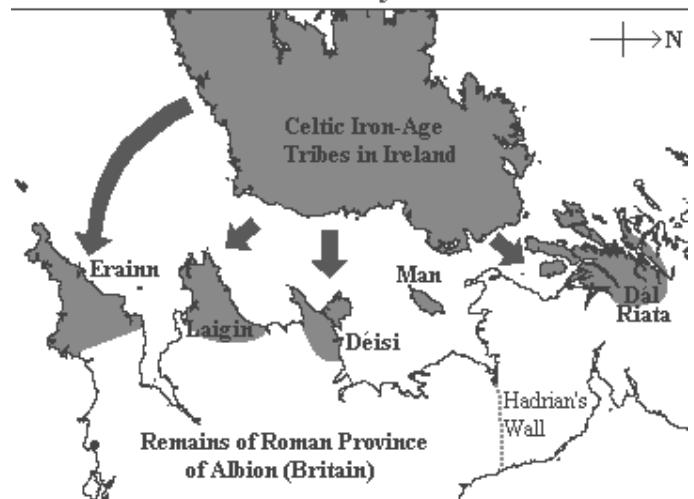
The druid Amhairghin had only just succeeded in casting a spell over the turbulent waves, when Éber Dónn was seized by a battle-frenzy and the charm was broken by his wild cries.

After the defeat of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, the advice of Amhairghin was ignored by Éber Finn, who refused to acknowledge the right of his older brother Éremón to be king over the whole of Ireland.

So it was that Ireland was partitioned into two kingdoms, with Éremón ruling in the north and Éber Finn the south.

But, a short time later, Éber Finn invaded Éremón's territory and laid waste to his lands until he fell in battle, Éremón then became *the first High King of Ireland* and ruled from his court at Tara.

#### Irish Colonies in Britain, 5th century AD



<sup>75</sup> Eire is the correct Gaelic name for Ireland.

<sup>76</sup> The battle was fought at Teltin, now Telltown.

## XXXX. The Genealogy of the High Kings of Ireland

### I A. The Legendary Fir Bholg High Kings

#### UNFINISHED

### I B. The Legendary Tuatha Dé Danaan High Kings

#### UNFINISHED

### II. The Legendary Mílesian High Kings

i



Breogán

**Breogán**, King of Celtic Galicia (Spain), was a descendant of a Scythian noble expelled from Egypt who settled in Spain and an ancestor of the Gaels.

The Gaels were descended from Adam through the sons of Noah. They spent 440 years wandering the Earth and underwent a series of trials and tribulations, eventually they sailed to Iberia and conquered it. There, Breogán found a city called Brigantia and built a great tower,<sup>77</sup> from which his son Íth glimpsed Ireland.

Íth was the first to land in Ireland, having traveled there on a peaceful voyage with ninety followers.

<sup>77</sup> Brigantia likely refers to A Coruña in Galicia (which was then known as Brigantium) and Breogán's Tower is likely based on the Tower of Hercules (which was built at A Coruña by the Romans).

At first he was received warmly by the Tuatha Dé Danaan, who had just lost their king, Neit, in a battle with the Fomhoiré.

The Tuatha Dé Danaan asked Íth to judge the rights of Mac Cuill, Mac Cécht and Mac Gréine to rule,

but, after Íth had so richly praised the fertility of the land, the three kings of the Tuatha Dé Danaan suspected him of having designs on the island and killed him.

His body was recovered and carried back to Brigantia by his companions,

and this led to a second, better prepared expedition - the subsequent invasion of Ireland by the Sons of Míl Éspáine.

The Gaels - including some of Breogán's sons - sailed to Ireland from Brigantia and took it from the Tuatha Dé Danaan - the pagan gods of that land.

Míl had organized the second expedition under the leadership of Éber Dónn, Éber Finn and Amhairghin the fili, and, although he did not accompany them, himself, his son Éremón was among the invaders.

The Sons of Míl Éspáine were the first mortal inhabitants of Ireland.

Bilé was the son of Breogán and father of *Miles Hispaniae* [Latin meaning, "Soldier of Hispania, (or, the Iberian Peninsula)".]

ii

Gaythelos (Goídel Glas) son of Nel (*Neolus, or Heolaus*) son of Fénius Farsaid, (a Babylonian who traveled to Scythia after the fall of the Tower of Babel), was exiled to Egypt and took service with Pharaoh Cingras, (a contemporary of Moses), and married Scota (daughter of Pharaoh).

Scota and Gaythelos (Goídel Glas), great-great grandfather of Partholón, were exiled from Egypt together with Greek and Egyptian nobles, and settled in Hispania after wandering for many years.

They settled in the northeast corner of the Iberian Peninsula, at a place called Brigancia (the city called A Coruña, that the Romans knew as Brigantium), and became the eponymous founders of the Scots and Gaels.

Míl Éspáine served as a soldier in Egypt and Scythia, before remembering a prophecy that his descendants would rule Ireland. He set off to the west, getting as far as Iberia, where fought several battles before dying, never seeing the Isle of Destiny himself.

His wife Scota,<sup>78</sup> and his uncle Íth, who has espied Ireland from the Tower of Breogán, sailed to Ireland, where Íth was killed by the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

When his body was brought back to Iberia, Míl's eight sons, and Íth's nine brothers invaded Ireland in thirty-six ships, they landed in *County Kerry*, although, because of some terrible storms (attributed to the magic of the Tuatha Dé Danaan), most of the Sons of Milesius died when they tried to land.

They fought their way to Tara - and defeated the Tuatha Dé Danaan. On the way, they encountered the wives of the three kings Banbha, Fódla and Ériu - a triad of goddesses known collectively as *the Spirit of Ireland*,

each promising victory to the invaders if the bribe they were offered was sufficient.

<sup>78</sup> Scota is the name given to two different mythological daughters of two different Egyptian Pharaohs to whom the Gaels traced their ancestry, allegedly explaining the name *Scoti*, applied by the Romans to Irish raiders, and later to the Irish invaders of Argyll and Caledonia which became known as Scotland.

That offered to Ériu was the best: Ériu was wooed by Amhairghin the fili, who promised her that the land would bear her name for all time.

In turn, she promised that Ireland would belong to the invading Sons of Míl Éspáine until the end of time.

At Tara the Sons of Míl Éspáine met the three king of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, and it was decreed that 5the invaders return to their ships and sail a distance of nine waves from Ireland, and if they were able to land again, Ireland would be theirs.

They set sail, but the Tuatha Dé Danaan used magic top brew up a storm, in which five of the sons of Míl Éspáine were drowned, leaving only Éber Finn, Éremón and Amhairghin the fili, to land and take the island from the Tuatha Dé Danaan in the *Battle of Tailtu*.

Amhairghin divided the kingship between Éremón, who ruled the northern half, and Éber Finn,<sup>79</sup> the southern.

A year after the *Battle of Tailtu*, Éber Finn became unhappy with his half and fought with his brother Éremón in the *Battle of Airgetros*, lost and was killed.

Éremón became the sole ruler of Ireland.

The High Kingship would alternate between the descendants of Éber Finn son of Míl Éspáine and the descendants of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine.

Éber Finn's sons included Commáel, Ér, Orba, Ferón and Fergna. [Ferón means blacksmith or metal-worker.]

iii

Before coming to Ireland, Éremón son of Míl Éspáine and his older brother Éber Dónn were joint rulers of Celtic Galicia.

They defeated the Tuatha Dé Danaan in the *Battle of Tailtu*.

Éremón had two wives: Odba, mother of Muimne, Luigne and Laigne,<sup>80</sup> whom he left behind in Spain, and Tea, mother of Íreal Fáid, who accompanied him to Ireland.

Muimne, Luigne and Laigne were joint High Kings of Ireland following the death of their father.

Muimne died of plague at Ráth Cruachan, (meaning "ringfort of Cruachan"), traditional capital of Connachta - one of the three great burial sites alongside Tailtu and Tara, also a gathering place or oenach.

Luigne and Laigne were killed by their cousins Ér, Orba, Ferón and Fergna, sons of Éber Finn son of Míl Éspáine, in the *Battle of Árd Ladra*, and ruled for half-a-year,<sup>81</sup> leaving no heirs, being killed by Íreal Fáid the Prophet son of Éremón in the *Battle of Cul Martha* in revenge for his brothers.

He cleared twelve plains, dug seven royal forts, and fought four battles against the Fomhoiréans.

Having ruled for ten years, he died at Magh Muaide, and was succeeded by his son Ethriél.<sup>82</sup>

Ethriél son of Íreal Fáid the Prophet son of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine ruled for twenty years.<sup>83</sup> During his reign he cleared six plains.

<sup>79</sup> Seathrún Céitinn, known in English as Geoffrey Keating, a 17th century Irish Roman Catholic priest, poet and historian, dates his reign to 1287 BCE, the *Annals of the Four Masters*, chronicles of medieval Irish history, to 1700 BCE.

<sup>80</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes their reign to the last years of Mithraeus and the first two years of Tuatanes as kings of Assyria (1192-1189 BCE, according to Jerome's *Chronicon*). Geoffrey Keating dates their reign from 1272 to 1269 BCE, the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1684 to 1681 BCE.

<sup>81</sup> Geoffrey Keating dates their reign to 1269 BCE, and *Annals of the Four Masters* to 1681 BCE.

<sup>82</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* places his death during the reign of Tuatanes in Assyria (1191-1182 BCE according to Jerome's *Chronicon*). Geoffrey Keating dates his reign from 1262 to 1259 BCE. The *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1681 to 1671 BCE.

He was the last of the chieftains who arrived who arrived in the invasion of the Sons of Milesius.

iv

Connáel<sup>84</sup> son of Éber Finn son of Míl Éspáine became High King of Ireland when he killed Ethriél son of Íreal Fáid in the *Battle of Rairiu*.

He was the first Milesian High King to have been born in Ireland, and the first to have been based in Munster.

He fought twenty-five battles against the descendants of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, and ruled for thirty years until he was killed by Tigernmas in the *Battle of Óenach Macha*.

The Egánacha<sup>85</sup> are said to be his descendants.

The Beautiful Lord of Death, Tigernmas<sup>86</sup> son of Follach son of Ethriél a descendant of Éremón, became High King when he overthrew his predecessor Connáel, and within a year of his ascension had won twenty-seven battles against the descendants of Éber Finn, almost completely destroying Éber Finn's line.

It is said that during his reign gold was first smelted in Ireland, by the wright Iuchadán.

Tigernmas was the first king to give drinking horns to his followers, and the first to have clothes dyed purple, blue and green and decorated with brooches, fringes and ornaments.

Seven lakes and three rivers burst from the ground during his reign.

After ruled for seventy-seven years,<sup>87</sup> he and three-quarters of the men of Ireland died on Samhain Eve at Magh Slécht (the plain of prostration) while worshipping *Crom Cruach*, a cruel deity propitiated with human sacrifice.

Ireland was without a High King for seven years after his death, before Eochaid Étgudach took the kingship from the remaining one-quarter of the men of Ireland.

v

Dáire Doimthech son of Sithbolg was a legendary King of Tara and High King of Ireland, and eponymous ancestor of the proto-historical Dáirine of Munster and historical Corcu Loigde of Munster.

A son of his was Lugaid Loigde ("of the Calf Goddess"), also known as Lugaid mac Dáire, an ancestor of Lugaid mac Con, belonging to the Corcu Loigde, and thus to the Dáirine.

He was one of the five kings from Tara to rule at Munster, or alternatively as one of the five Dáire's to rule at Tara.

Eochaid Étgudach son of Daire Doimthech, a High King of Ireland, was a descendant of Lugaid mac Ítha, nephew of Míl Éspáine.

<sup>83</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* says that during his reign that Tuatanes, King of Assyria, died (1182 BCE according to Jerome's *Chronicon*), as did Hector and Achilles (the Trojan War is usually dated to the 13th century BCE), and Samson was the king of the Tribe of Dan in ancient Israel. Geoffrey Keating dates his reign from 1259 to 1239 BCE, the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1671 to 1651 BCE.

<sup>84</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his death with the deaths of Samson in ancient Israel, and Fleuthius, king of Assyria. Geoffrey Keating dates his reign from 1239 to 1209 BCE, the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1651 to 1621 BCE.

<sup>85</sup> The Egánacha were not widely recognized as High Kings of Ireland or Kings of Tara, as they did not belong to the Uí Néill clan, but they controlled territories as large or larger than those of the other dynasty. The kings of the Hill of Tara were not recognized as High Kings of Ireland in the historical period.

<sup>86</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with the deaths of Thineas and Decylas, kings of Assyria, and the reigns of David and Solomon in Israel, the *Laud Synchronisms* with the Judean kings Asa and Jehoshaphat and the Assyrian king Pertiades (Pyriatides). The *Annals of the Four Masters* dates his reign to 1621 to 1544 BCE, Geoffrey Keating to 1209 to 1159 BCE.

<sup>87</sup> Or, 100 years according to the *Book of Fenagh*.

He introduced a system whereby the number of colours a man could wear in his clothes depended on his social rank, from one colour for a slave to seven for a king or queen.

He ruled for four years before he was killed in battle at Tara by Cermna Finn<sup>88</sup> son of Ebric and great-great grandson of Míl Espáine,

who succeeded to the throne jointly with his brother and colleague Sobaирce.

They were the first High Kings from Ulaid, (also referred to as the Clanna Rudraige, descendants of Rudraidhe son of Partholón). They divided the country between them, the border running from Drogheda to Limerick.

Cermna Finn ruled the southern half from Dún Cermna,<sup>89</sup> Sobaирce the northern half from Dún Sobaирce.<sup>90</sup>

They ruled for forty years.<sup>91</sup>

Cermna was killed by Eochaid Faber Glas son of Connáel (the previous High King) in the *Battle of Dún Cermna*.

Sobaирce died in the same year at the hands of Eochaid Menn, son of the king of the Fomhoiréans.

vi

Eochaid Faber Glas was a High King of Ireland. His epithet means "blue-green sharp edge."

He killed Smrigoll grandson of Tigernmas in the *Battle of Druimh Liatháin*.

He ruled for twenty years,<sup>92</sup> until he was killed by Smrigoll's son Fíachu Labrainne in the *Battle of Carman*.

Fíachu Labrainne<sup>93</sup> son of Smrigoll son of Enboth son of Tigernmas was a High King of Ireland.

He was named after the River Labrainn, which burst from the ground during his reign.

He fought a sea battle with the descendants of Éber Finn, and fought a battle against the Dáirine (Érainn) of Ireland at Magh Genainn in County Fermanagh, which resulted in Loch Erne<sup>94</sup> bursting from the land.

In another battle he killed Eochaid's son Mofebis. Mofebis' son Eochu Mumu killed him in vengeance in the *Battle of Slab Belgatain*.

Eochu Mumu<sup>95</sup> son of Mofebis son of Eochaid Faber Glas was a High King of Ireland.

The province of Munster is named after him.

<sup>88</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Eupales in Assyria. The chronology of Geoffrey Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 1159 to 1155 BCE, and that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* (which adds that there was a seven year interregnum between Tigernmas' death and Eochaid's ascension) from 1537 to 1533 BCE.

<sup>89</sup> Which Keating identifies as Downmacpatrick in Kinsale, County Cork.

<sup>90</sup> Which Keating identifies as Dunseverick, County Antrim.

<sup>91</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes their reign with those of Laosthenes in Assyria and Rehoboam in Judah. The chronology of Geoffrey Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates their reign from 1155 to 1115 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1533 to 1493 BCE.

<sup>92</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Piritiades in Assyria. Keating's chronology dates his reign from 1115 to 1095 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1493 to 1473 BCE.

<sup>93</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with those of Piritiades and Ofratalus in Assyria. The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 1095 to 1071 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1473 to 1449 BCE.

<sup>94</sup> Lough Erne is the second- biggest lake system in Northern Ireland and Ulster, and fourth biggest in Ireland.

<sup>95</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ofratanes in Assyria. The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 1071 to 1050 BCE, the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1449 to 1428 BCE.

He ruled for twenty-one years, fighting many battles against the descendants of Éremón son of Míl Espáine, before he was killed by Fiachu's son Óengus Olmucaid in the *Battle of Clú*.

He would be later avenged by his son Énna Airgdech.

vi

Óengus Olmucaid<sup>96</sup> son of Fíachu Labrainne, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Espáine was a High King of Ireland. The epithet of his name means "great hogs."

During the reign of his father, he conquered Scotland.

He came to power by killing the incumbent High King, Eochu Mumu, who had killed his father twenty-one years earlier.

He fought many battles against the Cruthne (Picts), the Fir Bholg, the Fomhoiréans and other people of Ireland, the people of the Orkney Islands and even the Longobarði.

He was killed by Énna Airgdech son of Eochu Mumu in the *Battle of Carman*.

Énna Airgdech ("rich in silver") son of Eochu Mumu, a descendant of Éber Finn son of Míl Espáine was a High King of Ireland.

He made silver shields for his nobles in Argatros.

He reigned for twenty-seven or twenty-eight years, before being killed by Óengus' grandchild, Rochechtad mac Main in the *Battle of Raigne*.

Rochechtad<sup>97</sup> son of Maen son of Óengus Olmucaid was delivered a mortal wound in single combat in the ringfort of Ráth Cruachan by Sétna Airt, and he died at Tara.

Sétna Airt fought to protect his son Fíachu Finscothach.

Sétna Airt<sup>98</sup> son of Arti son of Éber son of Ir son of Míl Espáine was a High King of Ireland.

He ruled for five years, until Fíachu, returning from exile at the head of a "black fleet," killed his father at Cruachan.

Fíachu was assisted in the killing of Sétna by the future High King Muinemón son of Cas Clothach son of Irárd son of Rochechtad son of Ros son of Glas son of Nuada Declam son of Eochaid Faber Glas son of Éber Finn son of Míl Espáine.

Fíachu Finscothach<sup>99</sup> son of Sétna Airt was a High King of Ireland. "Flowers of wine," which were pressed into glass vats, existed during his reign.

He ruled for twenty years, until he was killed by his former accomplice, Muinemón.

vii

Muinemón<sup>100</sup> son of Cas Clothach, a descendant of Éber Finn son of Míl Espáine, was a High King of Ireland.

He was the first king in Ireland whose followers wore golden torcs around their necks.

He ruled for five years, until he died of plague at Aidne in Connacht, and was succeeded by his son Faildergdóit.

Faildergdóit<sup>101</sup> son of Muinemón was the first king in Ireland whose subjects wore gold rings on their hands.

<sup>96</sup> Geoffrey Keating dates his reign from 1050 to 1032 BCE, the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1428 to 1410 BCE.

<sup>97</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 1005 to 980 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1383 to 1358 BCE.

<sup>98</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 980 to 975 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1358 to 1353 BCE.

<sup>99</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 971 to 955 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1353 to 1333 BCE.

<sup>100</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 955 to 950 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1333 to 1328 BCE.

He ruled for ten years before being killed, either by Sírna mac Déin, or by his successor Ollom Fotla<sup>102</sup> son of Fíachu Finscothach, a descendant of Ír son of Míl Éspáine.

Ollom Fotla, ("the scholar of Fódla") was High King of Ireland. He was given the name of Eochaid.

He took power after killing his predecessor, Faildergdóit, whose father, Muinemón, had killed his father.

He instituted the *Feis Temrach* or Assembly (parliament) of Tara, at which the nobles, scholars and military commanders gathered on Samhain every three years to pass and renew laws and approve annals and records.

The Assembly was preceded and followed by three days of feasting. He also built a structure at Tara called the *Múr nOlloman* or Scholar's Rampart.

He ruled for forty years, and died of natural causes at Tara, succeeded by an unbroken sequence of six descendants, beginning with his son Finnacha, followed by two more sons, Slánoll and Géde Ollgothach.

### viii

Elim Finnacha<sup>103</sup> son of Ollom Fotla, a descendant of Ír son of Míl Éspáine, was High King of Ireland in succession to his father.

There was "snow of wine" in his reign...

He ruled for twenty years before dying of plague at Magh Inis in Ulster, and was succeeded by his brother Slánoll.

Slánoll<sup>104</sup> son of Ollom Fotla, a descendant of Ír son of Míl Éspáine, was High King of Ireland in succession to his brother Finnacha.

It is said that there was no disease during his reign.

After a reign of fifteen, or seventeen, or thirty years, he was found dead of unknown causes in his bed at Tara, and was succeeded by his brother Géde Ollgothach.

Géde Ollgothach<sup>105</sup> son of Ollom Fotla, a descendant of Ír son of Míl Éspáine, was High King of Ireland. His epithet means "possessing a great voice."

During his reign all his subjects had voices as sweet as the strings of a zither.

He ruled for eight, or twelve, or seventeen years, before being killed by the otherwise unknown Fíachu son of Fiadchú, or by his nephew and successor Fíachu Findoilches son of Finnacha, a descendant of Ír son of Míl Éspáine.

Fíachu Findoilches<sup>106</sup> was a High King of Ireland. His epithet means "white or fair hidden one."

He succeeded to the throne after the death of his uncle Géde Ollgothach, whom he had killed.

All the cattle, or flowers, of Ireland had white heads in his reign, and he exacted a tax on white-headed cattle.

He founded Kells, County Meath.

<sup>101</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 950 to 943 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1333 to 1328 BCE.

<sup>102</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with those of Arbaces and Sosamus of the Medes. The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 943 to 913 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1318 to 1278 BCE.

<sup>103</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 913 to 895 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1278 to 1258 BCE.

<sup>104</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 895 to 880 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1257 to 1241 BCE.

<sup>105</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 880 to 863 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1241 to 1231 BCE.

<sup>106</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 863 to 833 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1231 to 1209 BCE.

He was the first king in Ireland to dig wells, but grain did not stay on the stalk in his reign.

He ruled for either twenty or thirty years, and was killed by Géde Ollgothach's son Berngal in revenge for his father.

Berngal<sup>107</sup> son of Géde Ollgothach, a descendant of Ír son of Míl Éspáine, was High King of Ireland.

He took power after killing his predecessor and cousin and father's killer, Fíachu Findoilches.

He made so much war that there was a shortage of milk and corn.

He ruled for either twenty-one or twelve years, until he was killed by his cousin Ailill son of Slánoll, a descendant of Ír son of Míl Éspáine.

Ailill mac Slánuill<sup>108</sup> was a High King of Ireland.

He took power after killing his cousin Berngal.

He ruled for twelve, fifteen or sixteen years before he was killed by Sírna Sáeglach a great-grandson of Rochechtaid mac Maen, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine.

### ix

Sírna Sáeglach<sup>109</sup> ("the long-lived") son of Dian son of Demel son of Rochechtaid mac Maen was a High King of Ireland.

He separated the province of Ulster from the authority of the High King and made war against the Ulaids, (also referred to as the Clanna Rudraige), who had killed his great-grandfather, for a hundred years, or one hundred and fifty years.

The Ulaids united with the Fomhoiréans and fought him in the *Battle of Móin Trógaide*, in County Meath, but a plague fell on them and the leaders of both sides died. Sírna was killed by Rochechtaid Rotha at Alind. His son was the legendary King Ailill Olcháin of Ireland.

Rochechtaid Rotha son of Róán son of Failbe son of Cas

Céntchaingnech son of Faildergdóit, a descendant of Éber Finn son of Míl Éspáine, was a king of the eastern midland kingdom of the Gailenga - vassal tribes of fighting men descended from Tadc mac Cein mac Ailill Aulom son of Mug Nuadat (slave of Nuada), king of the southern half of Ireland.

He became High King of Ireland after defeating his predecessor, Sírna Sáeglach, in the *Battle of Alind*.

He was the first Irish king to use a four-horse chariot, which he had made for his queen.

He ruled for seven years, until he was struck by lightning at Dunseverick, County Antrim.

He was succeeded by his son Elim Olfinechta.

Elim Olfinechta<sup>110</sup> son of Rochechtaid Rotha was a High King of Ireland.

Snow that tasted of wine fell during his reign.

He ruled for only one year, before he was killed by Gíallchad son of Ailill Olcháin son of Sírna Sáeglach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine.

<sup>107</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Deioches of the Medes (694-665 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 833 to 831 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1209 to 1197 BCE.

<sup>108</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Deioches of the Medes (694-665 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 831 to 815 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1197 to 1181 BCE.

<sup>109</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes the start of his reign with the reign of Deioches of the Medes (694-665 BCE), and his death with his successor Phraortes (665-633 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 814 to 794 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1181 to 1131 BCE.

<sup>110</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Phraortes of the Medes (665-633 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 787 to 786 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1024 to 1023 BCE.

Gállchad<sup>111</sup> was a High King of Ireland. He took power after killing his predecessor, and the son of his grandfather's killer, Elim Ólfinechta, in the *Battle of Trí nUisce*.  
 He took one out of every five men of Munster hostage.  
 Gállchad ruled for nine years, before being killed by Elim's son Art Imlech at Magh Muaidhe.  
 Gállchad's son was Nuada Finn Fáil.

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Art Imlech<sup>112</sup> ("having an edge or border" or "bordering on a lake or marsh") son of Elim Ólfinechta, a descendant of Éber Finn son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.  
 He took power after killing his predecessor, and his father's killer, Gállchad.  
 He dug seven forts in a reign that lasted twelve, or twenty-two years, before he was killed in battle by Gállchad's son Nuada Finn Fáil.  
 Nuada Finn Fáil<sup>113</sup> (the Fair of Fál - a poetic name for Ireland) son of Gállchad, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland,  
 who took power after he killed his predecessor, and his father's killer, Art Imlech.  
 He ruled for either sixty or forty or twenty years, before he was killed by Art's son Bres Rí.  
 His son was Siomón Brecc mac Aedan.  
 His son was Muiredach Bolgrach Siomon.

Bres Rí<sup>114</sup> son of Art Imlech, a descendant of Éber Finn son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.  
 He who took power after he killed his predecessor, and his father's killer, Nuada Finn Fáil.  
 He ruled for nine years, and fought many battles against the Fomhoiréans, before he was killed at Carn Conulain by Eochu Apthach.  
 Eochu Apthach<sup>115</sup> ("outlaw" or "fatal") of the Corcu Loígde ("of the Calf Goddess"), the proto-historic rulers of Munster, the Dáirine, was a distant descendant of Breogán, the father of Míl Éspáine, and a High King of Ireland.  
 He took power after killing the previous incumbent Bres Rí.  
 He only ruled for one disastrous year, as there was a plague every month of that year.  
 He was killed by Finn mac Blatha,<sup>116</sup> a descendant of Ollom Fotla son of Fiachu Finscothach, a descendant of Ír son of Míl Éspáine.

<sup>111</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Phraortes of the Medes (665-633 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign 786 to 777 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1023 to 1014 BCE.

<sup>112</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with those of Phraortes (665-633 BCE) and Cyaxares (625-585 BCE) of the Medes. The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 777 to 755 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1014 to 1002 BCE.

<sup>113</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Cyaxares of the Medes (625-585 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 755 to 735 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1002 to 962 BCE.

<sup>114</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon (605-552 BCE), and Cyaxares of the Medes (625-585 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 735 to 726 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 962 to 953 BCE.

<sup>115</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Darius the Great of Persia (522- 485 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 726 to 725 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 953 to 952 BCE.

<sup>116</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Darius the Great of Persia (522- 485 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 725 to 705 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 952 to 930 BCE.

Finn son of Blatha son of Labraid Condolg son of Ollom Fotla, a descendant of Ír son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.  
 He took power after he killed the previous High King Eochu Apthach. He ruled for twenty, or twenty-two, or thirty years, until he was killed by Sétna Innaraid son of Bres Rí, a descendant of Éber Finn son of Míl Éspáine.

Sétna Innaraid<sup>117</sup> ("of wages, stipend, reward") son of Bres Rí was a High King of Ireland.  
 He is the first king to pay his soldiers.  
 He ruled for twenty years, before being killed by Siomón Brecc grandson of Nuada Finn Fáil.

Siomón Brecc<sup>118</sup> ("the speckled, spotted, ornamented") son of Áedan Glas son of Nuada Finn Fáil, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.

He took power after he killed the incumbent, Sétna Innaraid, and was killed by Sétna's son Dui Finn.  
 His son was Muiredach Bolgrach.

Dui Finn<sup>119</sup> son of Sétna Innaraid, a descendant of Éber Finn son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.  
 He took power after killing his predecessor, and his father's killer, Siomón Brecc.  
 He ruled for ten years, before he was killed by Siomón's son Muiredach Bolgrach.

Muiredach Bolgrach son of Siomón Brecc, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.  
 He took power after killing his predecessor, and his father's killer, Dui Finn, ruled for thirteen months (or four years) and was killed by Dui's son Énna Derg.  
 His son was Fíachu Tolgrach.

Énna Derg<sup>120</sup> son of Dui Finn, a descendant of Éber Finn son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.  
 He took power after killing his predecessor, and his father's killer, Muiredach Bolgrach.  
 He was called *derg*, red, because he had a red face.  
 Coins were first used in Ireland during his reign.  
 He ruled for twelve years, before dying of plague in the Sliab Mis Mountains, surrounded by a large number of his troops.  
 He was succeeded by Lugaid Íardonn.

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Lugaid Íardonn<sup>121</sup> son of Énna Derg, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland. His epithet , Old Irish for "dark brown," came from the colour of his hair.

<sup>117</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Darius the Great of Persia (522- 485 BCE) and Xerxes I of Persia (485-465 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 705 to 685 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 930 to 910 BCE.

<sup>118</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Xerxes I of Persia (485-465 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 685 to 679 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 910 to 904 BCE.

<sup>119</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with those of Xerxes I (485-465 BCE) and Artaxerxes I (465-424 BCE) of Persia. The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 679 to 674 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 904 to 894 BCE.

<sup>120</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Artaxerxes I of Persia (465-424 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 670 to 658 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 893 to 881 BCE.

<sup>121</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Artaxerxes I of Persia (465-424 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 658 to 649 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 881 to 872 BCE.

He succeeded his father, who had died from the plague, to the throne, and ruled for nine years before he was killed at Ráth Clochair by Sírlám son of Finn mac Blatha, a descendant of Ír son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.

Sírlám<sup>122</sup> son of Finn mac Blatha was a High King of Ireland. He took power after killing his predecessor, Lugaid Íardonn, at Ráth Clochair. His name means "long hand" or "long arm," and it is said that his arms reached to the ground when standing up.<sup>123</sup> He ruled for thirteen, or sixteen years. He drove Lugaid's son Eochu Uairches into exile, but after twelve years overseas, Eochu returned and killed him with an arrow.

Eochu Uairches<sup>124</sup> son of Lugaid Íardonn, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland. After Lugaid was overthrown and killed by Sírlám, Eochu was driven into exile overseas, but he returned after twelve years, killed Sírlám with an arrow, and took the throne. His epithet is obscure: he gained it because of his exile, and it means "bare canoes" because he had canoes for a fleet, in which he and his followers used to plunder neighbouring countries. He ruled for twelve years, before he was killed by Eochu Fíadmuine and Conaing Bececlach.

Eochu Fíadmuine<sup>125</sup> was joint High King of Ireland with his brother (or half-brother) Conaing Bececlach.<sup>126</sup> They took power after killing the previous High King, Eochu Uairches. Eochu ruled the southern half of Ireland. Conaing the north. Their parentage is unclear: Eochu and Conaing were the sons of either Congal son of Lugaid Cal of the Corcu Loigde of County Cork, or that Eochu was the son of Congal, and Conaing the son of Dui Temrach son of Muiredach Bolgrach, or both the sons of Dui Temrach or Dui's son Congal Coscarach, but, both had the same mother, who was also the mother of Eochu Uairches. After five years of joint rule, Eochu was killed by Eochu Uairches' son Lugaid Lámderg. Conaing remained in power in the north, while Lugaid took the south. Lugaid ousted Conaing and took complete control of Ireland.

Seven years later, Conaing killed Lugaid and became sole ruler for a further ten (or twenty) years, after which he was killed by Lugaid's son Art.

Art son of Lugaid Lámderg son of Eochu Uairches, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland. He took power after killing his predecessor, and his father's killer, Conaing Bececlach.

<sup>122</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Artaxerxes I of Persia (465-424 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 649 to 633 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 872 to 856 BCE.

<sup>123</sup> Compare the Irish god Lug, whose epithet *lámfada* also means "long arm."

<sup>124</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Artaxerxes I of Persia (465-424 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 633 to 621 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 856 to 844 BCE.

<sup>125</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Artaxerxes I of Persia (465-424 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 621 to 616 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 844 to 839 BCE.

<sup>126</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Artaxerxes I (465-424 BCE) and Darius II (423-404 BCE) of Persia. The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 621 to 599 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 844 to 812 BCE. However, in the saga *Do Suidigid tellaich Temr* ("the settling of the manor of Tara"), the crucifixion of Christ takes place during his reign.

He ruled for six years, until he was killed by Fíachu Tolgrach and his son Dui Ladra.

Fíachu Tolgrach<sup>127</sup> son of Muiredach Bolgrach son, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was not a High King of Ireland. He succeeds Art, and rules for seven, or ten years, until, during the reign of Art's son Ailill Finn, he is killed in battle against Airgetmar son of Sírlám, a descendant of Ír son of Míl Éspáine, who became the High King of Ireland. His son Dui Ladra becomes High King.

Ailill Finn<sup>128</sup> son of Art mac Lugdach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland. He succeeded to the throne when his father was killed by Fíachu Tolgrach and his son Dui Ladra. He ruled for nine (or eleven) years. Two years into his reign, Fíachu Tolgrach was killed in battle against Airgetmar son of Sírlám. The men of Munster, led by Ailill's son Eochu and Lugaid son of Eochu Fíadmuine, then drove Airgetmar into exile overseas. After seven years, Airgetmar returned to Ireland and killed Ailill with the help of Dui Ladra and his son Fíachu, but was unable to seize the throne, which was taken by Eochu mac Ailella.

Eochu<sup>129</sup> son of Ailill Finn, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.

He ruled for seven years, resisted Airgetmar and made peace with Dui, who killed him treacherously at a meeting, allowing Airgetmar<sup>130</sup> to take the kingship. He ruled for thirty years, or twenty-three or thirty-eight years, after which he was killed by Dui and Eochu's son Lugaid Laigdech.<sup>131</sup>

Dui Ladra<sup>132</sup> son of Fíachu Tolgrach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, who had now had a hand in the killing of four kings, became High King of Ireland:

He helped his father kill the High King Art mac Lugdach, then helped Airgetmar take the throne by killing Art's son Ailill Finn and grandson Eochu mac Ailella.

Finally, he and Eochu Fíadmuine's son Lugaid Laigdech killed Airgetmar, and Dui took the throne himself, ruling for ten years, until his accomplice Lugaid killed him.

His son was Eochu Buadach, who was the father of the High King Úgaine Mór (mac Eochu).

Aed Rúad son of Badarn, Díthorba son of Deman and Cimbaeth son of Fintan, three grandsons of Airgetmar, were High Kings of Ireland who ruled in rotation, seven years at a time.

<sup>127</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 593 to 586 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 806 to 796 BCE.

<sup>128</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Artaxerxes II of Persia (403 to 358 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 586 to 577 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 795 to 786 BCE.

<sup>129</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Artaxerxes II of Persia (403 to 358 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 577 to 570 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 785 to 778 BCE.

<sup>130</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Artaxerxes III of Persia (358-338 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 570 to 547 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 778 to 748 BCE.

<sup>131</sup> *Lugaid Laigdech* is incorrectly made a son of Eochu mac Ailella, and given a son Rechtáid Rígderg ("red king").

<sup>132</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Artaxerxes III of Persia (358-338 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 547 to 537 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 748 to 738 BCE.

They each ruled for three seven-year terms, Áed died at the end of his third term, by drowning in a waterfall which was named *Eas Ruaid*<sup>133</sup> ("the red's waterfall"),

after him, Díthorba and Cimbáeth then took their turn, after which Áed's daughter Macha Mong Ruad, demanded to rule in her father's place when his turn came again.

Díthorba and Cimbáeth refused to allow a woman to take the throne, and battle ensued.

Macha won, and Díthorba was killed.

She won a second battle against Díthorba's sons, who fled into the wilderness of Connacht.

She married Cimbáeth, with whom she shared the kingship.

She pursued Díthorba's sons alone, disguised as a leper, and overcame each of them in turn when they tried to have sex with her, tied them up, and carried the three of them bodily to Ulster.

The Ulstermen wanted to have them killed, but Macha instead enslaved them and forced them to build the stronghold of Emain Macha (Navan Fort near Armagh), to be the capital of the Ulaid (Clanna Rudraige),

marking out its boundaries with her brooch.<sup>134</sup>

Macha ruled together with Cimbáeth for seven years, until he died of plague at Emain Macha,

and then ruled a further fourteen years on her own, until she was killed by Rechtaid Rígderg.

Macha Mong Ruad<sup>135</sup> ("red mane") daughter of Áed Rúad was the only warrior-queen in the list of High Kings of Ireland.



Rechtaid Rígderg<sup>136</sup> son of *Lugaid Laigdech* was a High King of Ireland.

He took power after killing High Queen Macha Mong Ruad, daughter of his father's killer, Áed Rúad, until he was killed by Úgaine Mór (mac Eochu), foster-son of Macha and her husband Cimbáeth.

<sup>133</sup> Assaroe Falls, Ballyshannon, County Donegal.

<sup>134</sup> Explaining the name *Emain Macha* as *eo-muin Macha* or "Macha's neck-brooch"

<sup>135</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy I Soter (323-283 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 468 to 461 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 661 to 654 BCE.

<sup>136</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy I Soter (323-283 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 461 to 441 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 654 to 634 BCE.

Úgaine Mór<sup>137</sup> (the Great) son of *Eochu Buadach*, a descendant of Éremón son of *Míl Éspáine*, was a High King of Ireland.

He took power by killing his predecessor, and his foster-mother's killer, Rechtaid Rígderg.

As well as Ireland, he ruled "Alba to the Sea of Wight" - i.e. the whole island of Britain - and "some say" all of Europe.

He married a princess of the Franks, Cessair Chrothach, daughter of **Clovis I of the Franks and the Gauls Soissons**, who bore him twenty-two sons and three daughters.

He divided Ireland into twenty-five shares, one for each of his children, which stood for three hundred years, until the establishment of the provinces by *Eochu Feidlech* son of Finn, a descendant of Éremón son of *Míl Éspáine*.

He ruled for thirty, or forty years, until he was killed by his brother Bodbchad.

Bodbchad<sup>138</sup> son of *Eochu Buadach*, a descendant of Éremón son of *Míl Éspáine*, was a High King of Ireland.

He seized power for a day and a half after he murdered his brother, the High King Úgaine Mór, until Lóegaire Lorc son of Úgaine Mór killed him.

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Lóegaire Lorc<sup>139</sup> son of Úgaine Mór was a High King of Ireland.

He ruled for two years.

His brother Cobthach Cóel Breg<sup>140</sup> son of Úgaine Mór coveted the throne and was so consumed with jealousy for his brother that he wasted away to almost nothing, from which he gained his epithet *Cóel Breg*, "the meagre of Brega"

Acting on the advice of a druid, he sent word that he was ill and pretended to be sick, so that Lóegaire would visit him.

When Lóegaire arrived, Cobthach lay on his bier and feigned death, and when his brother was bent over his body mourning, he treacherously stabbed him with a dagger.

Cobthach then paid someone to poison Lóegaire's son Ailill Áine, who had taken the kingship of Leinster, and forced Ailill's young son Labraid to eat his father's and grandfather's hearts and to swallow a mouse [monk], before forcing him into exile.

Struck dumb by the trauma, the boy became known as *Móen Ollom*, "the mute scholar."

Later, he was hit on the shin during *a game of hurling*, and cried out "I am hurt." From then on he was called *Labraid*, "he speaks."

Cobthach held an assembly in Tara, and asked who the most generous man in all Ireland was.

His poet, Ferchertne, and harper, Craiftine, immediately answered "Labraid," so Cobthach exiled the three of them from his court.

They took refuge with Scoriath, king of the Fir Morca in Munster.

After spending some time with Scoriath in Munster, Labraid goes to the continent, where he gains great fame as the leader of the bodyguard of the king of France, who is related to Labraid's grandmother Cessair Chrothach (who was a daughter of a king of the Franks).

<sup>137</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (281-246 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 441 to 411 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 634 to 594 BCE.

<sup>138</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (281-246 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign to 411 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* to 594 BCE.

<sup>139</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (281-246 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 411 to 409 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 594 to 592 BCE.

<sup>140</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (281-246 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 409 to 379 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 592 to 542 BCE.

Scoriath had a daughter, Moriath, who, hearing of Labraid's great deeds, fell in love with him from a distance. She wrote a love song for him, and sent Craiftine to Gaul to sing it to him. Labraid was delighted with the song, and decided to return to Ireland and reclaim his heritage. The king of France equipped him with ships and 2200 men, and, after a thirty year period of military service on the continent, Labraid returned to Ireland at the head of an army (from Gaul and Briton), known as *Laigin* after the broad blue-grey iron spearheads (*lúigne*) they carried.

Moriath daughter of Scoriath, had fallen in love with Labraid, but her mother always slept with one eye open to keep an eye on her. Craiftine played a slumber-strain on his harp to put her completely to sleep, and Labraid spent the night with Moriath. When her mother woke up and realized what had happened, Labraid confessed his love for Moriath and the two were married. With the help of Scoriath's army and Craiftine's harp, Labraid invaded Leinster. Cobthach made peace with Labraid, now known by the epithet "Loingsech," "the exile," and gave him the province of Leinster, but relations broke down again and war broke out between them. Labraid invited Cobthach, along with thirty kings of Ireland, to visit him, and built an iron house at Dind Rig to receive them, which took a year to build. Cobthach refused to enter the house unless Labraid's mother and jester went first. They did so. Labraid served his guests food and ale... and chained the house shut. With the aid of 150 bellows, Labraid burned Cobthach and 700 of his followers, along with Labraid's mother and jester, to death.<sup>141</sup> The jester had been promised that his family would be freed, and his mother was happy to die for the sake of her son's honour. He ruled for either fifty or thirty years.

Labraid was said to have "horse's ears," something he was concerned to keep quiet. He had his hair cut once a year, and the barber, who was chosen by lot, was immediately put to death. A widow, hearing that her only son had been chosen to cut the king's hair, begged the king not to kill him, and he agreed, so long as the barber kept his secret. The burden of the secret was so heavy that the barber fell ill. A druid advised him to go to a crossroads and tell his secret to the first tree he came to, and he would be relieved of his burden and be well again. He told the secret to a large willow. Soon after this, however, Craiftine broke his harp, and made a new one out of the very willow that the barber had told his secret to. Whenever he played it, the harp sang, "Labraid Lorc has horse's ears."

Labraid repented of all the barbers he had put to death and admitted his secret.

Labraid Loingsech Móen,<sup>142</sup> also known as Labraid Lorc, son of Ailill Áine, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland. He was the ancestor of the Laigin - "a god among the gods" - who gave their name to the province of Leinster.

<sup>141</sup> Cobthach's death and Labraid's ascension have been dated to Christmas Eve, 307 BCE.

<sup>142</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy III Euergetes of Egypt (246-222 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 379 to 369 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* to 542 to 523 BCE.

He ruled for ten, nineteen or thirty years, and took vengeance upon Cobthach's children, before being killed by Cobthach's son Meilge Molbhach.

Meilge Molbhach<sup>143</sup> ("the praiseworthy") son of Cobthach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.

He took power after killing his predecessor, and his father's killer, Labraid Loingsech.

He ruled for either seven or seventeen years, until he was killed by Mug Corb grandson of Rechtaid Rígderg son of Lugaid Laigdech son of Eochu Fíadmuine, in Munster.

When his grave was dug, a lake burst over the land, which was called Loch Meilge after him.

Mug Corb<sup>144</sup> ("servant of the chariot") son of Cobthach Cáem son of Rechtaid Rígderg was a High King of Ireland.

He got his name when he repaired a broken chariot for his son.

He took power when he killed his predecessor, Meilge Molbhach.

He ruled for six years, until he was killed by Óengus Ollom grandson of Labraid Loingsech.

Óengus Ollom<sup>145</sup> ("the scholar") son of Ailill son of Labraid Loingsech was a High King of Ireland.

He took power after he killed the previous incumbent, Mug Corb, and he ruled for eighteen years, until he was killed by Irereo son of Meilge Molbhach.

Irereo Fáthach<sup>146</sup> ("the wise") son of Meilge Molbhach was a High King of Ireland.

He took power after killing his predecessor, Óengus Ollom, and ruled for seven or ten years, until he was killed in Ulster by Fer Corb son of Mug Corb.

Fer Corb<sup>147</sup> son of Mug Corb son of Cobthach Cáem son of Rechtaid Rígderg son of Lugaid Laigdech son of Eochu Fíadmuine was a High King of Ireland.

He came to power after killing his predecessor, and his father's killer, Irereo, in Ulster.

He ruled for eleven years, until he was killed by Irereo's son Connla Cáem.

Connla Cáem<sup>148</sup> ("the beautiful"), also known as Connla Cruaidchelgach ("bloody blade"), son of Irereo Fáthach son of Meilge Molbhach son of Cobthach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.

<sup>143</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy III Euergetes of Egypt (246-222 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 369 to 362 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 523 to 506 BCE.

<sup>144</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy III Euergetes of Egypt (246-222 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 362 to 355 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 506 to 499 BCE.

<sup>145</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy III Euergetes of Egypt (246-222 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 355 to 337 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 499 to 481 BCE.

<sup>146</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy III Euergetes of Egypt (246-222 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 337 to 330 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 481 to 474 BCE.

<sup>147</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy IV Philopater of Egypt (221-205 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 330 to 319 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 474 to 463 BCE.

<sup>148</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy IV Philopater of Egypt (221-205 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 319 to 315 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 463 to 443 BCE.

He came to power after killing his predecessor, and his father's killer, Fer Corb, and ruled for four (or twenty) years, until he died in Tara, and was succeeded by his son Ailill Caisfiachlach.

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Ailill Caisfiachlach<sup>149</sup> ("having crooked/hateful teeth") *son of Connla Cáem* was a High King of Ireland.

He succeeded his father, and reigned for twenty-five years, until he was killed by Ademair, the son of the man who had killed Ailill's grandfather.

Ademair<sup>150</sup> *son of Fer Corb, a descendant of Eochu Fíadmuine*, was a High King of Ireland.

He came from Munster, killed the previous incumbent, Ailill Caisfiachlach, and reigned for five years, until he was killed by Eochaid Ailtlethan *son of Ailill Caisfiachlach*.

He was the husband of the *presumed* goddess Flidais of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, and mother of Nia Segamain, who by his mother's power over wild beasts was able to milk deer as if they were cows.

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Flidais, known by the epithet *Foltchgain* ("beautiful hair"). She was a goddess of animals, woodlands and fertility.<sup>151</sup>

She rode in a chariot drawn by deer, and, as goddess of domestic herds, possessed a magical cow of plenty.

Flidais was the mother of Fand, an otherworldly woman, by Áed Abrat; she was the sister of Lí Ban "the sea bird", wife of Labraid Luathiám ar Claudeb ("Labraid of the swift sword-hand"), the ruler of Magh Meall - *a mythical paradise achievable through death and glory - and Angus*.

Flidais was the mother of the adulterous Bé Chuille of the Fair Skin, wife of Eogan Inbir, whom was banished to the human world for committing adultery with Gaidiar *son of Manannán mac Lir*.

Conn Cétchathlach of the Hundred Battles married Bé Chuille, but she became infatuated with his son Art.

Bé Chuille's wickedness turned Conn's realm into a wasteland - she was eventually exiled.

Flidais was the mother of *Bé Téite*.

Flidais, wife of *Ailill Finn*, a petty king of the Erris district of Connacht, fell in love with Fergus mac Róich from afar.

Fergus and Dubthach Dóeltenga visited *Ailill Finn*, claiming to have fallen out of service to King Ailill mac Máta and Queen Medbh of Connacht, and provoked him to battle.

However, *Ailill Finn* proved difficult to defeat, beating Dubthach in single combat and holding out against a siege of his stronghold.

Fergus was only able to defeat him when King Ailill mac Máta arrived with the army of Connacht.

Fergus carried Flidais and her magical herd of cattle away from her husband.

She slept in the tent of King Ailill mac Máta, and every seven days her herd supplied milk for the entire army.

She had a favorite white cow known as "The Maol" that could feed 300 men from one night's milking.

After that, Fergus married Flidais.

<sup>149</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy V Epiphanes of Egypt (204-181 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 315 to 290 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 443 to 418 BCE.

<sup>150</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy V Epiphanes of Egypt (204-181 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 290 to 285 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 418 to 414 BCE.

<sup>151</sup> Somewhat akin to the Greek Artemis and Roman Diana.

It is said that unless he could have Flidais, it took seven women to satisfy him. He also became Queen Medbh's lover, and she was said to have demanded thirty lovers to satisfy her if she could not have Fergus.

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Eochaid Ailtlethan<sup>152</sup> ("broad blade") *son of Ailill Caisfiachlach son of Connla Cáem son of Irereo Fáthach son of Meilge Molbthach son of Cobthach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Espáine*, was a High King of Ireland.

He took the throne after overthrowing and killing the previous incumbent, Ademair *son of Fer Corb, a descendant of Eochu Fíadmuine*, and ruled for eleven years, until he was killed in battle by Fergus Fortamail *son of Bresal Brecc*.

Fergus Fortamail<sup>153</sup> *son of Bresal Brecc son of Óengus Ollom son of Ailill Bracan son of Labraid Loingsech son of Ailill Áine, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Espáine*, was a High King of Ireland.

He took power after killing the previous incumbent, Eochaid Ailtlethan, in battle, and ruled for either eleven, twelve or twelve and a half years, until he was killed by Eochaid's son Óengus Tuirmech Temrach.

Óengus Tuirmech Temrach<sup>154</sup> *son of Eochaid Ailtlethan* was a High King of Ireland. He came to power after killing his predecessor, and his father's killer, Fergus Fortamail.

His sons included Énna Aigneche and *Fiacha Fer Mara*.

Énna later became High King himself and was the ancestor of Conn Cétchathlach of the Hundred Battles and thus the Connacht dynasties and Uí Néill High Kings, while *Fiacha* was the ancestor of *Ailill Érann* and the Clanna Dedad. Óengus is said to have fathered *Fiacha* on his own daughter when drunk, and to have put him in a boat, wrapped in a purple robe with a golden fringe and accompanied by treasure, and set him out to sea - hence the epithet *fer mara*, "man of the sea."

He was found and brought up by fishermen, and became the ancestor of several High Kings of Ireland and later Dál Riata monarchs of Scotland.

His epithet is interpreted as meaning "the reckoner of Tara," saying that "by him was reckoning first made ion Ireland," or as *Tuirbeach* "ashamed," because of the incestuous conception of *Fiacha*.

He reigned for thirty of sixty years, and died at Tara.

Conall Collamrach<sup>155</sup> *son of Eterscél Temrach son of Eochaid Ailtlethan, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Espáine*, was a High King of Ireland.

He succeeded to the throne on the death of his uncle Óengus Tuirmech Temrach, and ruled for five years, until he was killed by Nia Segamain.

<sup>152</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy V Epiphanes of Egypt (204-181 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 285 to 274 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 414 to 386 BCE, which gives him a reign of seventeen years.

<sup>153</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy VI Philometor of Egypt (180-145 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 274 to 262 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 396 to 385 BCE.

<sup>154</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy VI Philometor of Egypt (180-145 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 262 to 232 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 385 to 326 BCE.

<sup>155</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy VII Physcon of Egypt (145-116 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 232 to 226 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 326 to 320 BCE.

Nia Segamain<sup>156</sup> son of Ademair, a descendant of Eochu Fíadmuine, and the woodland goddess Flidais Folchgain of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, was a High King of Ireland.

He ruled for seven years, until he was killed by Énna Aigneche son of Eochaid Ailtlethan.

His name means "sister's son or champion of Segamon the Gaul."<sup>157</sup>

Énna Aigneche<sup>158</sup> son of Eochaid Ailtlethan, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland. His epithet, "spirited, swift," was usually applied to horses.

He took power after killing his predecessor, and relative's killer, Nia Segamain, and ruled for twenty or twenty-eight years, after which he was killed by Crimthann Coscrach, the grandson of the man who had killed Énna's grandfather, in the *Battle of Árd Crimhainn*.

Crimthann Coscrach<sup>159</sup> ("the victorious") son of Fedlimid Fortré son of Fergus Fortamail, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.

He took power after killing his predecessor Énna Aigneche, and ruled for four or seven years, after which he was killed by Rudraige mac Sithrigi, Énna's great-great-great- great-great-great- great-great- great-grandfather killer's great-grandson.

Rudraige mac Sithrigi<sup>160</sup> son of Sitric son of Dub son of Fomor son of Airgetmar, a descendant of Ír son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.

He took power after killing his predecessor Crimthann Coscrach, and ruled for thirty or seventy years, after which he died of plague in Airgetglenn.

He was succeeded by Finnat Máir, son of Nia Segamain.

Rudraige was particularly associated with the northern part of Ireland.

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He was the grandfather of the Ulaid hero Conall Cernach and the Cruithne (Picts) dynasty of Dál nAraidi, who ruled eastern Ulster in the Middle Ages, traced their descent from him, as did the tribes of the Uíbh Eachach Cobha.

Finnat Máir<sup>161</sup> ("the great") son of Nia Segamain, a descendant of Eochu Fíadmuine and of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, was a High King of Ireland.

He succeeded to the throne after the death of Rudraige mac Sithrigi of plague, but after a reign of one, three or nine years he was killed by Rudraige's son Bresel Bó-Díbad son of Rudraige mac Sithrigi.

<sup>156</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy VII Physcon of Egypt (145-116 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 226 to 219 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 320 to 313 BCE..

<sup>157</sup> Segamon is perhaps related to Ségo, an ancient Gaulish deity equated in Roman times with Mars or Hercules.

<sup>158</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy VII Physcon of Egypt (145-116 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 219 to 191 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 313 to 293 BCE..

<sup>159</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Ptolemy VII Physcon of Egypt (145-116 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 191 to 184 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 293 to 289 BCE.

<sup>160</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes the start of his reign with that of Ptolemy VII Physcon of Egypt (145-116 BCE), and his death with that of Ptolemy X Alexander I (110-88 BCE) in Egypt. The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 184 to 154 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 289 to 219 BCE.

<sup>161</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes the start of his reign with that of Ptolemy X Alexander I (110-88 BCE) in Egypt. The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 154 to 151 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 219 to 210 BCE.

Bresel Bó-Díbad<sup>162</sup> son of Rudraige mac Sithrigi, a descendant of Ír son of Míl Éspáine, who became the High King of Ireland.

He took power after killing his predecessor, Finnat Máir, and ruled for eleven years, during which there was a plague on cattle (Old Irish *bó-díbad*, "extinction of cows") which left only one bull and one heifer alive.

Lugaid Luaigne<sup>163</sup> son of Finnat Máir was a High King of Ireland. He came to power after killing his predecessor, and his father's killer, Bresel Bó-Díbad, and ruled for five or fifteen years, before he was killed by Congal Cláiringnech son of Rudraige mac Sithrigi.

Lugaid is presented as an ancestor of the Egánacha, whose origins, possibly Gaulish, are very obscure.<sup>164</sup> He is also regarded [ ] as one of several late emanations of Lugaid Lófge, ancestor of the Corcu Loígde.

Congal Cláiringnech<sup>165</sup> ("the cripple") son of Rudraige mac Sithrigi, a descendant of Ír son of Míl Éspáine, was a king of Ulster and a High King of Ireland.

He was the brother of Bresel Bó-Díbad, the former High King, who had been killed by Lugaid Luaigne.

While Lugaid Luaigne was the High King of Ireland, Congal shared the kingship of Ulster with Fergus mac Léti, ruling the northern half of the province while Fergus ruled the southern half.

The Ulstermen objected to being ruled by two kings, and both submitted to the judgment of the High King at Tara as to which should rule the province.

Lugaid decided to give the kingship to Fergus, who his daughter Findabair had fallen in love with, and compensate Congal with land, status and gold, but, Congal refused and declared war.

He was supported by some of the Ulster noblemen, including Fergus mac Róich and Bricriu, a trouble-making poet, as well as allies from the other Irish provinces and from Scotland.

Fergus mac Léti also called upon his allies, including the giant Fachtna Fáthach son of Cas (*Ross the Red*) and Maga daughter of Oenghus Mac in Og from Ulster, and father of Conchobhar mac Nessa, Cet mac Mágach from Connacht, the brother of Conall Cernach's mother, and King Mesgegra of Leinster, and there were great losses on both sides.

Conall Cernach killed Mesgegra in single combat following a battle provoked by the Athirne the Importunate son of Fer Chedne (Ferchertne), Cobthach's fili, fili and satirist of the court of King Conchobhar mac Nessa of Ulster.

Mesgegra had lost a hand in an earlier fight, so Conall fought him with one hand tucked into his belt.

Mesgegra was beheaded [ ] and Conall took it as a trophy of battle, cut out his brain and preserved it with lime: The calcified brain was later stolen by Set mac Mágach and used to kill Conchobhar mac Nessa.

Congal fitted out a fleet and left Ireland for Lochlann (Scandinavia) to seek new allies.

He married Beiuda daughter of the king of Lochlann, and, reinforced with 20,000 Scandinavian warriors, set sail again.

<sup>162</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes the start of his reign with that of Ptolemy X Alexander I (110-88 BCE) in Egypt. The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 151 to 140 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 210 to 199 BCE.

<sup>163</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes the start of his reign with that of Ptolemy X Alexander I (110-88 BCE) in Egypt. The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 140 to 135 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 199 to 184 BCE.

<sup>164</sup> Accordingly, they were descendants of Heber son of King Milesius from the north of Spain (Modern-day Galicia).

<sup>165</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes the start of his reign with that of Ptolemy XII Auletes (80-51 BCE) in Egypt. The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 135 to 120 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 184 to 169 BCE.

After making conquests in Britain and gaining further allies there, he returned to Ulster. He learned that Fergus mac Léti was staying at the house of Eochaid Sálbuide ("Yellow heel"), father of Princess Nessa of the Ulaid, mother of Conchobhar mac Nessa, and resolved to storm it. The house was burned down, but Fergus and Eochaid escaped. Congal decided, rather than ravage his own country, to march on Tara and fight Lugaid Luaigne for the High Kingship of Ireland. A terrible battle was fought between their armies, and Congal met Lugaid on the battlefield and beheaded him. After Congal had installed himself as High King, Fergus mac Léti came to Tara to make peace with him. Congal accepted his overtures, but stripped him of the kingship of Ulster, giving it to his brother *Ross Ruad*. In the reign of Fachtina Fáthach, *Ross* was killed in the *Battle of Lough Foyle*, and Fergus was made king of Ulster again.

Congal ruled Ireland for fifteen or sixteen years, at the end of which he was killed by Lugaid Luaigne's grandson Dui Dallta Dedad.

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Dui Dallta Dedad<sup>166</sup> son of Caipre Lusc son of Lugaid Luaigne, a descendant of Eochaid Fíadmhuine and of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, was a High King of Ireland.

He was the foster-son of Deda mac Sin of the Dáirine (Érainn) of Ireland, eponymous ancestor of Clanna Dedad and a king of Munster.

He took power after killing his predecessor, and grandfather's killer, Congal Cláiringnech, and ruled for ten years, at the end of which he was killed by Fachtina Fáthach at the *Battle of Árd Brestine*.

Fachtina Fáthach<sup>167</sup> ("the wise") son of Cas (*Ross the Red*) son of Rudraige mac Sithrigi and Maga daughter of Oenghus Mac in Og from Ulster, was father of King Conchobhar mac Nessa of Ulster, was a High King of Ireland.

He came to power when he defeated the previous High King, Dui Dallta Dedad at the *Battle of Árd Brestine*.

He was the lover of Princess Nessa of the Ulaid daughter of King Eochaid Sálbuide of Ulster and father of her son King Conchobhar mac Nessa of Ulster.

After he reigned for sixteen or twenty-five years, he paid a visit to Ulster. While he was there, King Eochu Feidlech of Connacht raised an army and marched on Tara,

he had the provincial kings killed and took hostages from Tara.

When news reached Fachtina at Emain Macha, he rallied the support of the Ulstermen, and challenged him to battle. Eochu agreed, and named the battlefield as Leitir Ruad in the Corann, Connacht (modern County Sligo).

During the *Battle of Leitir Ruad* Eochu surrounded, defeated, and beheaded Fachtina, and became High King in his place.

King Eochaid Sálbuide of Ulster was also killed.

**Fergus mac Róich** covered the Ulster army's retreat, and Eochu marched to Tara.

Eochu Feidlech<sup>168</sup> ("the enduring") son of Finn son of Rogen Ruad son of Essamain Emma son of Blathnachta son of Labraid Lorc son

<sup>166</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes the start of his reign with that of Ptolemy XII Auletes (80-51 BCE) in Egypt and the civil war between Pompey and Caesar in Rome (49 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 120 to 110 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 169 to 159 BCE.

<sup>167</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes Fachtina's reign with the Roman civil war between Caesar and Pompey (49 BCE) and the reign of Cleopatra (51-30 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 110 to 94 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 159 to 143 BCE.

<sup>168</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with the dictatorship of Julius Caesar (48-44 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 94 to 82 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 143 to 131 BCE.

of Énna Aigneche, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.

He is best known as the father of the legendary **Queen Medbh of Connacht**.

He took power when he defeated the previous High King, Fachtna Fáthach, in the *Battle of Leitir Ruad*.

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Eochu Feidlech married *Cloithfín* and she was the mother of six daughters and four sons.

The six daughters were: Derbriu, Eile, Mugain, Eithne, Clothru and Medbh.

The four sons were: Bres, Nár and Lothar, a set of triplets known as the *findemna* ("three fair ones of Emain Macha"), and *Conall Anglodach*.

Derbriu was the lover of **Oenghus Mac in Og** of the Tuatha Dé Danaan.

Her mother-in-law, *Garbdaib*, turned six men into pigs for the crime of eating nuts from her grove, and Derbriu protected them for a year until they were killed by Medbh.

When Conchobhar mac Nessa became king of Ulster, Eochu gave four of his daughters, Mugain, Eithne, Clothru and Medbh, to him in marriage to compensate for the death of his *supposed* father, Fachtina Fáthach.

Clothru bore him his eldest son **Cormac Cond Longus** - although some traditions make him the son of Conchobhar by his mother, Nessa.

Eithne bore him a son, Furbaide, who was born by posthumous caesarian section after Medbh drowned her.

Mugain *Aitinchairchech* ("having gorse-like pubic hair") was the Strumpet wife of King Conchobhar mac Nessa of Ulster. She bore him a son named Glaisne.

Her affair with Áed, Conchobhar's hapless fili (poet), led to the death of Lóegaire Búadach ("the Victorious").

When Áed was to be drowned in a lake near Lóegaire's house for adultery with Conchobhar's wife Mugain, he cried for help and Lóegaire rushed to the rescue.

As he leapt out the door, he knocked the top of his head on the lintel. Still, he managed to kill thirty soldiers and save Áed's life before he died.

The Ulstermen took Mugain's life, out of the love of her, though they seldom engaged in femicide.

Medbh bore Conchobhar a son named *Amalgad*, but later left him, and Eochu set her up as queen of Connacht.

Some time after that, Eochu held an assembly at Tara, which both Conchobhar and Medbh attended.

The morning after the assembly, Conchobhar followed Medbh down to the River Boyne where she had gone to bathe, and raped her.

Eochu made war against Conchobhar on the River Boyne, but was defeated.

The *findemna* conspired to overthrow their father in the *Battle of Druim Criaich*.

The night before the battle they were met by their sister, Clothru, who tried in vain to dissuade them from this course of action.

They were childless, so for fear that they might die without an heir Clothru seduced all three and took them to bed, conceiving Lugaid Riab nDerg, son of the three *findemna*.

*Lugaid* later became High King of Ireland, so that Clothru's incest preserved the line of succession of the high kingship.

The next day they were killed, and their father, seeing their severed heads, swore that no son should directly succeed his father to the High Kingship of Ireland.

Eochu Feidlech ruled for twelve years, and died of natural causes at Tara, succeeded by his brother Eochu Airem.

Eochu Airem<sup>169</sup> ("the ploughman") *son of Finn, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine*, was a High King of Ireland.

He succeeded to the throne after the death of his brother, Eochu Feidlech, and ruled for twelve or fifteen years, until he was burned to death in Fremain by *Sigmall Sithienta*.

He was succeeded by Eterscél.

The beautiful Étain daughter of Étar was the lover of Midhir of Brí Léith son of the Dagda of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, husband of the witch Fúamnach of the progeny of Béothach son of Iardanél and foster-daughter of the wizard druid *Bresel Etarlám*.

Midhir received the help of his foster-brother **Oenghus Mac in Og** of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, the young god of love and poetic inspiration, to make her his new bride.

This provoked jealous Fúamnach's vengeance against the beautiful young bride, and she cast several spells on her as soon as she arrived at Midhir's residence in Brí Léith - causing her a number of disgraces,

First, having welcomed the couple and having seated Étain, she struck her wand of scarlet rowan on her, transforming her rival into a pool of water.

When Étain changed from being a pool into a worm and subsequently a beautiful scarlet fly (*civil corcrai*), she joined with Midhir once more as his constant companion.

Second, on a visit to Midhir (escorted by Lugh, the Dagdhae and the Ogmae), Fúamnach announced that she would drive Étain away from him and employed a spell which she had learned from her foster-father:

she conjured up a mighty wind which blew Étain through the air for the duration of seven years, and does not allow it to alight anywhere but the rocks of the sea;

eventually, she came to land on the clothes of Oenghus Mac in Og in the Brug, who recognized it as Étain, but he is at war with Midhir and cannot return her to him.

He lovingly kept her with him in a specially designed, protective bower (*grianán*) with windows so she can come and go, and carries the little chamber with him wherever he went.

Third, on discovering what had become of Étain, Fúamnach deceived Mac Óc into coming to Brí Léith on the pretext that she desired to establish peace between them.

However, as Mac Óc was on his way, Fúamnach traveled to the Burg by an alternative route and conjured yet another wind which forced Étain to roam another seven years without setting foot on land.

Étain finally arrived at a house in Ulster, where she fell into the cup of wine of the (anonymous) wife of Étar, a chieftain.

As she emptied her cup, she swallowed the beautiful fly and miraculously gave rebirth to Étain as her own daughter - *one thousand and twelve years after her first birth*.

Étain grew up and, one day, met a mysterious horseman who had been looking for her.

Fúamnach did not live long to see the fruits of her evil work. When Mac Óc met Midhir at Brí Léith, he discovered what despicable scheme had led him there.

Mac Óc followed Fúamnach's trail to the house of her foster-father *Bresel* and there struck off her head, which he carried as a trophy back to the Brug.

Étain Echraide ("horse rider") married High King Eochu Airem of Ireland, and she became pregnant with a daughter, called Étain Óg (Étain the Younger).

Eochu's brother *Ailill Angubae* falls in love with her, and begins to waste away.

Eventually he admits to Étain that he is dying of love for her, and she agrees to sleep with him to save his life.

They arrange to meet, but Midhir casts a spell which causes *Ailill* to fall asleep and miss the assignation.

However, Étain meets a man there who looks and speaks like *Ailill* but does not sleep with him because she senses that it is not actually him.

This happens three times, and the man who looks like *Ailill* reveals himself to be Midhir, and tells her of her previous life as his wife. She refuses to leave with him, though, unless her husband first gives his permission.

She then returns to *Ailill* to find him cured.

Far from giving up, Midhir made an attempt to bring his lover back home, going to see the king in true form and challenging him to many games of *fidchell* - *an ancient Celtic board game*.

He offers a stake of fifty horses, and gives Eochu the horses as promised.

Midhir then challenged him to more games, for higher stakes, and keeps losing.

Eochu, warned by his foster-father that Midhir was a being of great power, sets him a series of tasks, including laying a causeway over Móin Lámrig, which he performs reluctantly.

He then challenges Eochu to one final game of *fidchell*, the stake to be named by the winner.

This time, Midhir won and demanded an embrace and a kiss from Étain as his prize.

Eochu agreed that he would have it, only if he returned in a month's time.

A month later, Midhir returned and Eochu kept his word, allowing him the kiss, but he turned himself and Étain into swans and left the royal residence through the chimney.

Eochu did not accept the loss of his wife and pursued them, instructing his men to dig up every *sidh* (fairy-mound) in Ireland... until his wife was returned to him.

Finally, when they set to digging up Midhir's *sidh* at Brí Léith, Midhir appeared and promised to give Étain back on the following day.

But at the appointed time, Midhir brought fifty women, who all looked alike, and an old hag told Eochu to pick which one was Étain.

He chose the woman he thought was his wife, and took her home and sleeps with her. She became pregnant and bore him a daughter.

Later, Midhir appeared and told him that Étain had been pregnant when he took her, and the woman Eochu had chosen was his own daughter, who had been born in Midhir's *sidh*.

Eochu Airem had been fooled into believing that his daughter, Étain Óg, was her mother, and slept with her, and they had a daughter; because of her incestuous conception, Eochu ordered her exposed, but she was found and brought up by a herdsman and his wife. She was named Mess Búachalla, meaning "the cow-herder's foundling." She grew up to be a very beautiful woman.

Étain Óg married King Cormac of Ulster.

Eterscél Mór<sup>170</sup> ("the great") *son of Íar mac Dedad son of Deda mac Sin, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine*, was a High King of Ireland.

<sup>169</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with the dictatorship of Julius Caesar (48-44 BCE). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 82 to 70 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 131 to 116 BCE.

<sup>170</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Augustus (27 BCE - AD 14) and the birth of Christ. The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 70 to 64 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 116 to 111 BCE.

The High King Eterscél Mór, Eochu's successor, had no children. It was prophesied that a woman of an unknown race would bear him a son.

He found and forcibly marries Mess Búachalla *daughter of Étain Echraide and the former High King Eochu Airem*.

One night, in Eterscél's house, Mess Búachalla was visited by an unknown man who flew in her skylight in the form of a bird, and she had his son, Conaire Mór, who was brought up as Eterscél's own son and eventually became the High King of Ireland.

Eterscél Mór ruled for five or six years, at the end of which he was killed by Nuada Necht in the *Battle of Aillenn*.

He was a contemporary of the legendary provincial kings Conchobhar mac Nessa, Cairbre Nia Fer, Cú Roi and Ailill mac Mata.

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Nuada the High King © Jim Fitzpatrick

Nuada Necht<sup>171</sup> son of Sétna Sithbac, a descendant of Crimthann Coscrach son of Fedlimid Fortréan, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Espáine, of the Laigin, was a High King of Ireland.

He came to power after killing his predecessor, Eterscél Mór, and ruled for six months, at the end of which he was killed by Eterscél's son Conaire Mór.

He was a contemporary of the legendary provincial kings Conchobhar mac Nessa, Cairbre Nia Fer and Ailill mac Mata.

High King Nuada Necht of Ireland was the father of *Bascine*, the ancestor of *Cumhall mac Trénmór*, a leader of the Fianna and father of **Fionn mac Cumhaill**.

\* \* \*

*Cumhall* was a suitor of Muirne *daughter of the druid Tadg mac Nuadhat*. (It is unclear whether Tadg's father was the short-lived High King Nuada Necht, the god Nuadha Airgetlamh of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, or Nechtan of the Tuatha Dé Danaan.)

Muirne had many suitors, but her father had foreseen that her marriage would lead to the loss of his home on the Hill of Almu (in County Kildare), so he refused them all.

<sup>171</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Augustus (27 BCE - AD 14) and after the birth of Christ. The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 64 to 63 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 111 to 110 BCE. The *Four Masters* combine his reign with that of Ér, Orba, Ferón and Fergna centuries before, to make a whole year in their chronology.

*Cumhall* abducted her after her father refused her hand. Tadg appealed to High King **Conn of the Hundred Battles**, who outlawed and pursued *Cumhall*.

*Cumhall* was slain by Goll mac Morna, a member of the Fianna, in the *Battle of Cnucha*, who took over the leadership of the Fianna. He gained the name Goll ("one-eyed") when he lost an eye in battle with *Cumhall*.

But Muirne was already pregnant, so her father rejected her and told his followers to burn her.

Conn prevented this and sent Muirne into the protection of *Fiacal mac Conchinn* and his wife, the druidess Bodbmall, who was *Cumhall*'s sister.

She gave birth to a son, who she called Deimne, but who later became known as Fionn when his hair turned prematurely white. Muirne left the boy in the care of Bodbmall and a warrior woman called Liath Luachra, who brought him up in secret in the forest of Sliabh Bladhma.

They taught him to hunt, and accompanied him on some of his early adventures. When he grew up, news of his exploits spread.

Eventually Fionn's ever-spreading fame threatens to bring his father's killers to him, and, having taught him all they knew, his caretakers sent him out to make his own way in the world - and he went into the king of Bantry's service..

Muirne went on to marry a local king, *Gleor Lámder*, and saw her son again only once, when she came to visit him in the forest.



Since Nuada lost an arm in battle, he was no longer allowed to rule, as Tuatha Dé Danaan kings must be physically perfect and 'unblemished'. He was replaced by the half-Fomorian Bres, who was quickly found unfit by rule by the Tuatha Dé people for his tyranny.

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Conaire Mór<sup>172</sup> ("the great") son of Mess Búachalla incestuous daughter of Eochu Airem and his daughter, Étain Óg, was

<sup>172</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Augustus (27 BCE - AD 14) and after the birth of Christ. The

conceived when an unknown man who flies in her skylight in the form of a bird, and was brought up as the son of High King Eterscél Mór of Ireland:

Eterscél Mór *son of Íar mac Dedad son of Deda mac Sin of the Dáirine (Érainn) of Ireland, eponymous ancestor of Clanna Dedad and a king of Munster, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine.* Conaire Mór took power after killing his predecessor, and his adopted father's killer, Nuada Necht.



Celtic (Irish & Welsh) God of harpers, healing, historians, magic, poets, warfare, writing. King of the Tuatha de Danaan at one time, he had to step down when he lost his hand in battle; it was replaced by a silver one.

Eterscél Mór was honoured with a "bull feast," (in which a bull is killed, a man eats his fill of its meat and drinks its broth, and sleeps as incantations are chanted over him). Whoever the man sees in his sleep will become the new king). The chosen man saw a naked man coming along the road to Tara with a stone in his sling.

The young Conaire, meanwhile, is hunting birds in his chariot. He chases them into the sea, where they become armed men, announcing themselves as his father's bird-troop, and inform him that it is forbidden for him to hunt birds. The leader of the bird troop told Conaire to go naked into Tara, where he would be made king, and placed several *geasa* (taboos) on his reign.

Among other things, he may not be preceded by three red men into the house of a red man. As he approached Tara he was met by three kings carrying clothes for him, and when he arrived he was made king.

His reign was long and mostly peaceful. But events conspired to make him break his *geasa* one-by-one. After he had already broken several of his taboos, he was traveling south along the coast of Ireland, he had been advised to stay the night at Da Derga's Hostel, but as he approached it, he saw three men dressed in red riding red horses arriving before him. "Da Derga" means "Red god." He realized that three red men had preceded him into the house of another red man... but he entered the hostel, anyways, and another of his *geasa* was broken.

His three foster-brothers, the three sons of *Dond Désa* whom Conaire had exiled to Alba (originally meaning Britain, later Scotland) for their crimes, had made alliance with *Ingcel Cáech*, the one-eyed pirate king of the Britons, and they were marauding across Ireland with a large band of followers.

chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 63 to 33 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 110 to 49 BCE.

They attacked Da Derga's Hostel. Three times they attempted to burn it down, and three times the fire is put out.

Conaire, protected by his champion Mac Cécht and the Ulster hero Conall Cernach, kills six hundred before he reached his weapons, a further six hundred with his weapons.

He asked for a drink, but all the water had been used to put out the fires.

Mac Cécht traveled across Ireland with Conaire's cup, but none of the rivers would give him water.

He returns with a cup of water just in time to see two men cutting Conaire's head off - and kills both of them.

Conaire's severed head drinks the water and recites a poem praising Mac Cécht.

The battle rages for three more days. Mac Cécht is killed, but Conall Cernach escapes.

Conaire Mór had ruled for thirty or seventy years, and was a contemporary of the legendary provincial kings Conchobhar mac Nessa, Cairbre Nia Fer and Ailill mac Mata

Conall Cernach *son of Amergin mac Eccit the fili son of Eccit Salach the smith and Findchóem, sister of King Conchobhar mac Nessa of the Ulaid, and wet nurse of Cú Chulainn the "Hound of Chulainn,"* was the ancestor of the kings of the Cruithne tribes of the Dál nAraidi and the Uíbh Eachach Cobo.

The legendary High King Mal mac Rochride of Ireland was also said to be descended from him.

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Lugaid Riab nDerg<sup>173</sup> ("the red-striped") or Réoderg ("Red Sky") *son of Clothru and her three incestuous brothers, Bres, Nár and Lothar, the findemna ("three fair ones of Emain Macha"), the triplets of Eochu Feidlech and Cloithfinn,* was a High King of Ireland: Eochu Feidlech *son of Finn, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine,* was a High King of Ireland.

His epithet came from two red stripes around his neck and waist, dividing him into three: above the neck he resembled Nár, from the neck to the waist he resembled Bres, and from the waist down he resembled Lothar.

He came to power after a five-year (or six-year) interregnum following the death of Conaire Mór.

Lugaid slept with his mother and incestuously conceived Crimthann Nia Náir - a High King of Ireland.

Clothru was thus both his mother and grandmother.



<sup>173</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Claudius (AD 41-54). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 33 to 13 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 33 to 9 BCE.

Lugaid's foster-father, the Ulster hero Cú Chulainn, split the Lia Fáil ("Stone of Destiny") with his sword when it failed to roar under Lugaid. It never roared again except under Conn of the Hundred Battles.

(*The Lia Fáil was a stone at the Inauguration Mound on the Hill of Tara in County Meath, Ireland, which served as the coronation stone of the High Kings of Ireland.*

*In legend, all the kings of Ireland were crowned on this Coronation Stone up to Muirchethach mac Ercae, circa AD 500.*

*It was brought to Ireland by the semi-divine race of the Tuatha Dé Danaan.)*

His wife was *Derbfgaill daughter of the king of Lochlann (Scandinavia)*, who had fallen in love with Cú Chulainn from afar and come to Ireland with a handmaiden in the form of a pair of swans, linked by a golden chain, to seek him out.

Cú Chulainn and Lugaid were at Loch Cuan (Strangford Lough) and saw them fly past.

Cú Chulainn, at Lugaid's urging, shot a sling-stone which hit *Derbfgaill*, penetrating her womb, and the two women fell to the beach in human form.

Cú Chulainn saved *Derbfgaill's* life by sucking the stone from her side, and she declared her love for him, but because he had sucked her side he could not marry her - *evidently he had violated some geis or taboo.*

Instead he gave her to Lugaid. They married and she bore him children.

One day in deep winter, the men of Ulster made pillars of snow, and the women competed to see who could urinate the deepest into the pillar and prove herself the most desirable to men.

*Derbfgaill's* urine reached the ground, and the other women, out of jealousy, attacked an mutilated her, gouging out her eyes and cutting off her nose, ears, and hair.

Lugaid had noticed that the snow on the roof of her house had not melted, and realized that she was close to death.

He and Cú Chulainn rushed to the house, but *Derbfgaill* died shortly after they arrived, and Lugaid died of grief.

Cú Chulainn avenged them by demolishing the house the women were inside, killing 150 of them.

Lugaid had ruled for twenty-five or twenty-six years.

Conchobar Abradruad<sup>174</sup> ("red eyelashes") son of *Find File son of Ros Ruad son of Ferhus Fairgge son of Nuada Necht, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine*, of the Laigin, was a High King of Ireland.

He succeeded to the throne after the death of Lugaid Riab nDerg, and ruled for a year, at the end of which he was killed by Lugaid's son Crimthann Nia Náir.

Crimthann Nia Náir<sup>175</sup> (*nephew of Nár*) son of *Lugaid Riab nDerg* overthrew Conchobar as High King of Ireland and ruled for sixteen years.

He went on a voyage with his aunt *Nár*, a fairy woman, for a month and a fortnight, and returned with treasures including a gilded chariot, a golden *fidchell* board, a gold-embroidered cloak, a sword inlaid with gold serpents, a silver-embossed shield, a spear and a

<sup>174</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Vespasian (AD 69-79). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 13 to 12 BCE, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 9 to 8 BCE.

<sup>175</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Vespasian (AD 69-79). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 12 BCE to AD 5, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 8 BCE to AD 9.

sling which never missed their mark, and two greyhounds with a silver chain between them.

Soon after her returned he fell from his horse and died at Howth - a village and outer suburb of Dublin, Ireland.

Cairbre Cinnchait<sup>176</sup> ("cat-head" or "hard head") son of *Duthach* was a descendant of a Scandinavian prince who came to Ireland with Labraid Loingsech Móen, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine or of the Fir Bholg, was a High King of Ireland.

Cairbre succeeded Crimthann as High King of Ireland "after he had killed all the nobility."

Cairbre was of either the Luaigne of Tara, the Tuatha Dé Danaan, the Catraige of Connacht, the Corcorti (descendants of former High King *Cimbáeth*), or a descendant of Ír son of Míl Éspáine.

His wife was *Mani daughter of the king of the Uaile*, and they had a son, *Morann mac Máin*.

During Cairbre's reign crops failed, cows did not give milk, and there were no fish in the rivers.

He died after ruling five years, died of plague, and was succeeded by Feradach Finnfechtnach, who must have been less than five years old.

Feradach Finnfechtnach ("fair-blessed")<sup>177</sup> son of *Crimthann Nia Náir* was a High King of Ireland. He came to power after the death of Cairbre Cinnchait.<sup>178</sup>

When Cairbre overthrew his father, his mother, *Baine daughter of the king of Alba*, was pregnant with him - but this would make him less than five years old when he came to the throne.

Ireland was fertile during his reign, contrasting it with the barren reign of the usurper Cairbre.

The judge Morann mac Máin son of *Cairbre* and his wife *Mani* lived in Feradach's time.

Morann owned the *id Morainn* (Morann's collar or torc) which would contract around the neck of a judge who made an unjust judgment until he made a just one, or of a witness who made a false testimony until he told the truth.

Feradach ruled for twenty or twenty-two years, before dying a natural death at Tara.

He was succeeded by Fíatach Finn.

Fíatach Finn mac Dáire,<sup>179</sup> a distant descendant of *Óengus Tuirmech Temrach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine*, was a king of the Uaile, later a High King of Ireland, and the eponymous ancestor of the early Medieval Ulster dynasty of the Dál Fiatach. He was king of the Uaile while Feradach Finnfechtnach was High King of Ireland, and succeeded to the High Kingship when Feradach died.

He ruled for three years until he was killed by Fíachu Finnolach.

Fíatach Finn mac Dáire was also a cousin to the legendary King Cú Roi mac Dáire of Ulster and Conaire Mór of the Érainn and Dáirine (Clanna Dedad).

<sup>176</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Domitian (AD 81-96). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from AD 55 to 60, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from AD 9 to 14.

<sup>177</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Domitian (AD 81-96) and the death of Pope Clement I (AD 99). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from AD 5 to 25, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from AD 14 to 36.

<sup>178</sup> Geoffrey Keating has Feradach succeed his father Crimthann, placing Cairbre's reign later.

<sup>179</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Nerva (AD 81-96). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from AD 25 to 28, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from AD 36 to 39.

The Dál Fiatach are said to be descended from the Family of Cú Roi.

Fíachu Finnolach<sup>180</sup> son of Feradach Finnfechtnach was a High King of Ireland.

He took power after killing his predecessor, Fíatach Finn. He ruled for fifteen, seventeen, or twenty-seven years,

after which he, and the freemen of Ireland, were killed in an uprising of the *althech-tuatha* or "subject peoples" ("the peasants of Ireland"), led by the four provincial kings: Elim mac Conrach of Ulster, *Sanb son of Cet mac Mágach* of Connacht, *Foirbre* of Munster and *Eochaid Ainchen* of Leinster. (*Cet mac Mágach* was a rival of the Ulster hero Conall Cernach.)

Fíachu's wife was *Eithne daughter of the king of Alba* (originally meaning Britain, later Scotland), who was pregnant, fled home to Alba, where she gave birth to Fíachu's son Túathal Techtmár, who would ultimately return to Ireland to claim the throne.

King Elim mac Conrach<sup>181</sup> of Ulster son of Conrai became the High King of Ireland.

He had overthrown the previous High King Fíachu Finnolach in an uprising of the *althech-tuatha* or "subject peoples," killing him at a feast.

The nobility of Ireland were massacred, with only three pregnant women escaping: Fíachu's wife *Eithne Ingel daughter of the king of Alba; Gruibne daughter of the kin of Britain and wife of the king of Munster; and Aine daughter of the king of the Saxons, and wife of the king of Ulster*.

*Gruibne* was the mother of *Corb Olom*, ancestor of the Eóganachta of Munster; *Aine*'s son *Tibraide Tirech* was the ancestor of the Dál nAraidi of Ulster; *Eithne* fled to Alba where she gave birth to Fíachu's son Túathal Techtmár.

During his reign Ireland was without corn, fruit, milk, or fish, as the gods punished the *althech-tuatha* for their rejection of the legitimate kingship.

Elim ruled for twenty years, at the end of which Túathal landed at Inber Domnann and was proclaimed king.

He then marched on Tara and defeated and killed Elim in battle on the nearby Hill of Achall.

Alternatively, Cairbre was the leader of the uprising of the *althech-tuatha* or "subject peoples;"

and the three pregnant women of the nobility who escaped the massacre were: *Baine daughter of the king of Alba* (originally meaning Britain, later Scotland), who was the mother of Feradach Finnfechtnach son of Crimthann Nia Náir, who succeeded him as High King of Ireland; *Cruife daughter of the king of Britain*, who was the mother of *Corb Olum*, ancestor of the Eóganachta of Munster; and *Aine daughter of the king of Saxony*, who was the mother of *Tibraide Tirech*.

### III. The Legendary Goidelic High Kings

i

Túathal Techtmár<sup>182</sup> ("the legitimate") son of Fíachu Finnolach son of Crimthann Nia Náir son of Lugaid Riab nDerg son of Clothru

<sup>180</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Nerva (AD 81-96). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from AD 28 to 55, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from AD 39 to 56.

<sup>181</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Hadrian (AD 117-138). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from AD 60 to 80, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from AD 56 to 76.

<sup>182</sup> The *Annals of the Four Masters* gives the date of Túathal's exile as AD 56, his return as 76 and his death as 106. Geoffrey of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar*

*and her three incestuous brothers, the findemna, the triplets of Cloithfinn and Eochu Feidlech son of Finn, a descendant of Éremón son of Mil Éspáine*, was a High King of Ireland.

He was the ancestor of the Uí Néill and Connacht dynasties through his grandson Conn of the Hundred Battles.

Túathal's father, Fíachu Finnolach, was deposed in an uprising of the *althech-tuatha* or "subject peoples."

Túathal's mother, *Eithne daughter of the king of Alba*, who was pregnant, fled home to Alba, where she gave birth to Túathal, who, twenty years later, returned to Ireland at the head of an army to reclaim his father's throne.

Túathal, prevailed upon to return, landed with his forces at Inber Domnann (Malahide Bay) - the invasion of the Goidels (pirates, raiders).

He joined forces with the brothers *Fiacha Cassán* and *Findmall* and their 600 marauders, and marched on Tara, where he was declared king.

Elim was defeated and killed in battle at the Hill of Achall.

Túathal then won battles against the *Ligmuini*, the Gaileón, the Fir Bholg, the Fir Domnann, the Ulaid, the *Muma*, the Fir Ól nÉcmacht and the Érainn, and assembled the Irish nobility at Tara to make them swear allegiance to him and his descendants.

### The "Kingdoms" of Ancient Britain



Túathal fought 25 battles against Ulster, 25 against Leinster, 25 against Connacht and 35 against Munster.

The whole country subdued, he convened a conference at Tara, where he established laws and annexed territory from each of the four provinces to create the central province of Míde (Meath) around Tara as the High King's territory.

He built four fortresses in Meath: Tlachtga, where the druids lit the winter fires and sacrificed on the eve of Samhain (November 1), on land taken from Munster; Uisneach or Cnoc Uisnigh, where the festival of Beltaine, the Gaelic May Day (celebrated on April 30, or May 1) was celebrated, on land from Connacht; Tailtiu, where Lughnasadh was celebrated, marking the beginning of the harvest season (originally on August 1), on land from Ulster; and Tara, on land from Leinster.

*Éirinn* broadly agrees, dating his exile to 55, his return to 80 and his death to 100. The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* places him a little later, synchronizing his exile with the reign of Roman Emperor Domitian (81-96), his return in the reign of Hadrian (122-138) and his death in the reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161).

He went on to make war on Leinster, burning the stronghold of Aillén (Knockaulin) and imposing the *bórama*, a heavy tribute of cattle, on the province.

Because the king of Leinster, *Eochaid Ainchenn*, had married Túathal's daughter *Dáirine*, but told Túathal she had died and so was given his other daughter, *Fithir*. When *Fithir* discovered *Dáirine* was still alive she died of shame, and when *Dáirine* saw *Fithir* dead she died of grief.

Túathal, or his wife *Baine*, built Ráth Mór, an Iron Age hillfort in the earthwork complex of Clogher, County Tyrone.

He died in battle against King Mal mac Rochride of Ulster at Mag Line (*Moylinny* near Larne, County Antrim). His son, Fedlimid Rechtmar, later avenged him.

• • •

It is possible that the Romans may have given support to Túathal, to regain in his throne, in the interest of having a friendly neighbour who could restrain Irish raiding.

ii

King Mal mac Rochride<sup>183</sup> (*son of Rochride*) of the Ulaid, a descendant of Conall Cernach *son of Amhairghin the fili of the Tuatha Dé Danaan*, Cú Chulainn's foster-father, was a High King of Ireland.

He took the High Kingship after he killed Túathal Techtmair at Mag Line, and ruled for four years, at the end of which he was killed by Túathal's son Fedlimid Rechtmar.

Fedlimid Rechtmar<sup>184</sup> ("the lawful, legitimate" or "the passionate, furious") or Rechtaid ("the judge, lawgiver") *son of Túathal Techtmair*, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.

His mother was *Báine daughter of Scál*.

He took power after killing his predecessor, and his father's killer, *Mal son of Rochride*.

He instituted the principle of *an eye for an eye* into Irish law, after which the behaviour of the Irish improved.

The completion of the road construction around Tara is attributed to him.

He ruled for nine or ten years before dying in bed, and was succeeded by Cathair Mór.

One of his sons, Conn Céthathlach, would succeed Cathair.

The youngest of his six sons, *Fiacha Suighe*, was the ancestor of the Dia Fiachrach Suighe.

*Eochaid Finn* was also his son.

Cathair Mór<sup>185</sup> ("the great") *son of Fedlimid Fir Uglais son of Cormac Gelta-gaith*, a descendant of Mug Corb son of Cobhach Cáem son of Rechtaid Rígderg son of Lugaid Laigdech son of Eochu Fíadmuine, and the woodland goddess Flidais Foltchgain of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, was a High King of Ireland.

He took power from Fedlimid Rechtmar.

He had thirty children, but only ten of them had children; several medieval dynasties of Leinster traced their ancestors to them.

<sup>183</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 100 to 104, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 106 to 110.

<sup>184</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 104 to 113, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 110 to 119.

<sup>185</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 113 to 116, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 119 to 122.

His daughter *Cochrann* was the mother of the Fenian hero Diarmuid Ua Diubhne *son of Donn the Dark One, Lord of the Dead, a chief of the Sons of Mil and father of the Irish race, and foster-son of the love god Oenghus Mac in Og*.

Cathair's daughter *Eithne Tháebfhosta* was fostered by a hospitable Leinsterman named *Buchet* who had many herds of cattle, but Cathair's sons so exploited *Buchet's* hospitality that he was only left with one bull and seven cows, and the king, now old and enfeebled, was unable to restrain them. *Buchet* and his family, including *Eithne*, are reduced to living in a hut in the forest in Kells, County Meath. *Later, when Cormac mac Airt is High King, he marries Eithne and restores Buchet's fortunes*.

Cathair gave the Hill of Almu (Knockaulin, County Kildare) to the druid Nuada *son of Achi*. The hill was later made famous as the home of Nuada's great-grandson **Fionn mac Cumhaill**.

Cathair ruled for three years, at the end of which he was killed by the Luaigne of Tara, led by Conn Céthathlach.

iii

Conn Céthathlach<sup>186</sup> ("of the Hundred Battles") *son of Fedlimid Rechtmar*, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland, and the ancestor of the Connachta, and, through his descendant Naill Noígíallach ("of the Nine Hostages") *son of Eochaid Mugmedon*, the Uí Néill dynasties, which dominated Ireland in the early Middle Ages, and their descendants.

He took power after killing his predecessor Cathair Mór.

The Lia Fáil ("Stone of Destiny"), the coronation stone at Tara which roared when the rightful king stood on it, roared under Conn for the first time since Cú Chulainn split it with his sword when it failed to roar for Lugaid Riab nDerg.

Conn tread on the stone by accident while walking on the ramparts of Tara - it had been lost and half-buried since Cú Chulainn's time. A druid explained the meaning of the stone, saying that the number of cries the stone made is the number of kings who will follow Conn - but he did not name them.

A magical mist arose, and a horseman approached and threw three spears at Conn, then asked him and the druid to follow him to his house, which stood on a plain by a golden tree.

They entered, and were welcomed by a woman in a gold crown.

First they saw a silver vat, bound with gold hoops, full of red ale, and a golden cup and a serving spoon.

Then they saw a phantom, a tall beautiful man, on a gold throne, who introduced himself as Lugh *son of Cian, also known as Scal Balb, son of Dian Cecht the healer of the Tuatha Dé Danaan* - his mother was Ethniu *daughter of King Balor of the Fomhoiréans*.

The woman was the Sovereignty of Ireland, and she serves Conn a meal consisting of an ox's rib 24 feet (7.3 m) long, and a boar's rib. When she served drinks, she asked, "To whom shall this cup be given?"

And Lugh recited a poem which told Conn how many years he would reign, and the names of the kings who would follow him.

Then they entered Lugh's shadow, and the house disappeared, but the cup and serving spoon remained.

Conn had a long reign - twenty, twenty-five, thirty-five or even fifty years, spending much of it at war with King Mug Nuadat (slave of Nuada) of Munster *son of Mug Neit son of Derg son of Dergthene*

<sup>186</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 116 to 136, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 122 to 157.

*son of Enna Munchain son of Loch Mor son of Muiredach Mucna son of Eochaid Garb son of Dui Dalta Dedad, ancestor of Sithbolg, eponymous ancestor of the proto-historical Dáirine of Munster and historical Corcu Loigde of Munster.*

Mug Nuadat's father Mug Neit had expelled the kings of Munster, *Conaire Cóem, a descendant of Conaire Mór and Mac Niad mac Lugdach, prince of the Dáirine or Corcu Loigde.*

The two kings fled to Conn, and married his daughters, *Sáruit* and *Sadb ingen Chuinn* respectively. Sadb was the mother of High King Lugaid mac Con of Ireland.

Mug Neit made war on Conn, but was defeated and killed after two battles in County Offaly.

Mug Nuadat led his father's forces in retreat through Munster, fighting Conn to a standstill before escaping by sea to Oiléan Béarra (Beare Island, now called Bere Island), and thence to Spain. Conn restored Conaire Mór and Mac Niad to their kingdoms and withdrew.

Nine years later, Mug Nuadat, who had married the daughter of the king of Spain, landed with an army near Bantry Bay and forced Conaire and Mac Niad to submit to his overlordship.

Mug Nuadat obtained an army from the king of Leinster and expelled the kings of Munster: *Lugaid Allathach, Dáire Dormhor* and *Aonghus.*

*Aonghus* fled to Conn, who gave him an army with which to reclaim his kingdom, but Mug Nuadat defeated this and a further nine attempts by Conn to drive him out of Munster.

With the kings of Ulster and Leinster, Mug Nuadat marched north to Mag nAi and forced Conn to make a treaty with him, dividing Ireland between them.

Conn controlling the north, or *Leath Cuinn* ("Conn's half"), and Mug Nuadat the south, or *Leath Moga* ("Mug's half"), with the border lying between Galway in the west and Dublin in the east.

After fifteen years of peace Mug Nuadat broke the treaty and declared war, along with the kings of Ulster and Leinster.

He led his army to Mag Leana, near Tullamore, County Offaly.

Conn retreated to Connacht, gathered his forces, and retook Meath from the king of Ulster.

He then marched south to Mag Leana and destroyed Mag Nuadat's army in a surprise night attack on his camp.

Conn killed Mug Nuadat in his bed in the fighting, and Conn became king of all Ireland.

**Fionn mac Cumhail** was born in Conn's time. His father, Cumhall son of Trénmór, a warrior in Conn's service, was a suitor for Muirne daughter of the druid Tadg mac Nuadat, but Tadg refused the suit, so Cumhall abducted her.

Conn went to war against him, and Cumhall was killed by Goll mac Morna in the *Battle of Cnucha.*

But Muirne was already pregnant, and Tadg rejected her, ordering her to be burned.

She fled to Conn, and Conn put her under the protection of Cumhall's brother-in-law, *Fiacal mac Conchinn.*

It was in Fiacal's house that Muirne gave birth to a son, Deimne, who was later renamed Fionn.

When he was ten, Fionn went to Tara and put himself in Conn's service.

He learned that every year at Samhain, marking the end of harvest season and the beginning of winter, the monster Aillen "the burner" of the Tuatha Dé Danaan who resides in the underworld, Magh Mell, would put everyone to sleep with his music, and burn down the palace with his fiery breath.

Fionn killed Aillen, having kept himself awake by pressing the head of his poisonous spear against his forehead, and warding off Aillen's flame with his cloak...

and Conn made him the head of the Fianna in place of Goll mac Morna.

Conn had two sons, *Connla* and Art mac Cuinn. *Crionna*, their brother, was killed by their uncle *Eochaid Finn.*

*Connla* fell in love with a fairy woman from Magh Mell - the underworld realm achievable only through death and/or glory - and went to her otherworld home in her crystal boat... never to be seen again.

After that Art was known as Art Óenfer (literally "one man," used in the sense of "lone," "solitary" or "only son").

Conn's wife, *Eithne Táebfada* daughter of *Cathair Mór*, died. Another fairy woman, Bechuma of the Fair Skin, the wife of *Eogan Inbir*, committed adultery with *Gaidiar son of Manannán mac Lir*, and was banished by the Tuatha Dé Danaan to the human world (Ireland).

She had fallen in love with Art from a distance and sought him out in her currach - a boat with a wooden frame, over which animal skins or hides are stretched - but, when she met Conn and learned he was without a wife, agreed to marry him instead, on the condition that Art be banished from Tara for a year.

The men of Ireland thought this unjust, and Ireland was barren during that year.

The druids discovered that this was Bechuma's fault, and declared that the famine could be ended by the sacrifice of the son of a sinless couple in front of Tara.

Conn went in search of this boy in Bechuma's currach.

He landed on a strange island of apple trees.

The queen of the island had a young son, the result of her only sexual union.

Conn told her that Ireland would be saved if the boy bathed in the water of Ireland, and she agreed.

He took him back to Ireland, but when the druids demanded his death, he, Art and Fionn mac Cumhail swore to protect him.

Just then, a woman driving a cow carrying two bags approached, and the cow was sacrificed instead of the boy.

The bags were opened: one contained a bird with one leg, and the other a bird with twelve legs.

The two birds fought, and the one-legged bird won.

The woman said the twelve-legged bird represented the druids, and the one-legged bird the boy, and revealed herself as his mother. She told Conn that the famine would end if he would put Bechuma away, but he refused.

Bechuma placed a *geis* (taboo) on Art, after he lost a game of *fidchell*; after which he had to leave Ireland never to return until he found and rescued the maiden *Delbchaem* ("fair shape").

Art traveled to the Land of Wonder, facing untold dangers and was forced to kill *Delbchaem's* mother a fearsome and supernatural figure. It had been foretold by the druids that she would be killed by a suitor of her daughter.

When Art and *Delbchaem* returned to Ireland, *Delbchaem* banished Bechuma from Tara as the result of a series of challenges over a game of *fidchell*, returning fertility to the region.

Conn was eventually killed by King Tipraite Tirech of the Ulaid son of *Mal mac Rochride*, a descendant of *Conall Cernach*, and founder of the Dál nAraidi.

Tipraite sent fifty warriors dressed as women from Emain Macha to kill him at Tara, and defeated him in the *Battle of Túath Amrois*.

His son-in-law Conaire Cóem succeeded him as High King, and Conn's son Art later succeeded him.

Upon the death of *Mac Niad*, Sadb married Ailill Aulom son of Mug Nuadat, king of the southern half of Ireland, from the Deirginte (or Clanna Dergthened), a king of Munster and Leath Moga.

He divided the kingdom between his sons Éogan Mór, Cormac Cas, and Gian.

King Éogan Mór of Munster founded the dynasty of the Eóganachta. Sadb's son Lugaid mac Con son of Mac Niad mac Lugdach, who was Ailill's foster-son, became a High King of Ireland.

*Sadb* is described as "one of the four best women that man ever lay with."

Her brother was Art mac Cuinn, a High King of Ireland, while her sister *Sáruit* married Conaire Cóem of the Érainn, who was a High King before him.

iv

Conaire Cóem<sup>187</sup> ("the beautiful") son of *Mug Láma* son of *Coirpre Crou-Chend* son of *Coirpre Firmaora* son of *Conaire Mór* son of *Mess Búachalla*, incestuous daughter of *Eochu Airem* and his daughter *Étain Óg*, was a High King of Ireland.

He came to power on the death of his father-in-law Conn Céchathlach, and ruled for seven or eight years, at the end of which he was killed by *Nemed* son of *Sroibcenn*, in the *Battle of Gruitime*. He was succeeded by Conn's son Art mac Cuinn.

Conaire had three sons by Conn's daughter *Sáruit*: Cairpre Músca, ancestor of the Múscaige and Corcu Duibne; Cairpre Baschain, ancestor of the Corcu Baiscind; and Cairpre Riata, ancestor of the Dál Riata, with the descendants of all known as the Síl Conairi, after himself or his ancestor/double Conaire Mór.

Art mac Cuinn,<sup>188</sup> also known as Art Óenfer, son of Conn Céchathlach, succeeded to the High Kingship after his brother-in-law Conaire Cóem was killed by *Nemed* son of *Sroibcenn*, in the *Battle of Gruitime*.

He ruled for twenty or thirty years. During his reign Conaire's sons took revenge against *Nemed* and his allies, the sons of Ailill Aulom, in the *Battle of Cennfebrat* in Munster.

Ailill's foster-son Lugaid mac Con son of Mac Niad mac Lugdach was wounded in the thigh in the battle, and was exiled from Ireland.

He made an alliance with *Benne Brit* son of the king of Britain, raised an army of Britons and Saxons, and conquered Ireland as far as Connacht where Éogan Mór, with the help of Art mac Cuinn, planned to fight.

Art was given hospitality by *Olc Acha*, a local smith (or druid), the night before the battle.

It had been prophesied that a great dignity would come from *Olc*'s line, and he gave Art his daughter Achtan to sleep with. She was his mistress, to whom he paid a dowry of cattle.

The night before the battle Éogan and Art slept with their host's daughters, conceiving their sons who would succeed them: Fiachu Muillethan in Éogan's case and Cormac mac Airt in Art's.

Both Éogan and Art died in the *Battle of Maige Mucruimhe* - on the plain of the counting of the pigs, in Connacht, and Mac Con became the king of Tara.

Mac Con took Cormac mac Airt as his foster-son, and ruled for seven years.

When he pronounced a false judgment, showing that he was unfit to rule, disaster ensued - "no grass came through the earth, nor leaf on tree, nor grain in corn."

Mac Con was deposed, and Cormac, having given a right judgment, was made king in his place.

Mac Con traveled to Ailill's court, where his foster-mother warned him that he was in peril. When Ailill embraced Mac Con he bit him with his poison tooth, wounding Mac Con, who fled but was killed by one of Ailill's warriors.

<sup>187</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Commodus (180-192). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 136 to 143, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 157 to 165.

<sup>188</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Commodus (180-192). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 143 to 173, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 165 to 195.

Medb Lethderg ("red-side") was the goddess of sovereignty at Tara and queen of Leinster.

It was Medb who granted sovereignty to the future king by coupling with him.

Medb Lethderg was the wife of nine successive kings, including, Cú Corb, then Fedlimid Rechtaid, father of Conn Céchathlach, then of his grandson Art mac Cuinn, and later still of Cormac mac Airt, who could not be considered a king until he had slept with her. Great indeed was the strength and power of Medb over the men of Ireland, for she it was who would not allow a king in Tara without his having her as a wife.

And by her was built the royal rath on the side of Tara: Rath Medbae.

v

Lugaid Mac Con,<sup>189</sup> often known simply as Mac Con, son of Mac Niad mac Lugdach and Sadb ingen Chuinn daughter of the former High King Conn Céchathlach, was a High King of Ireland.

After Mac Niad died, Sadb married King Ailill Aulom of Munster son of Mug Nuadat (slave of Nuada), ancestor of Sithbolg, eponymous ancestor of the proto-historical Dáirine of Munster and historical Corcu Loigde of Munster, and *de facto* king of the southern half of Ireland, and Lugaid became his foster-son.

He gained his patronymic/epithet ("dog's son") after he was suckled as a child by a greyhound called *Eloir Derg*, which belonged to his foster-father.

Lugaid and his step-brothers, against Ailill's will, were allies of King *Nemed* of the Érainn of Munster son of *Sroibcenn*, who had killed the former High King Conaire Cóem in the *Battle of Gruitime*.

During the reign of Art mac Cuinn, Conaire's sons defeated and killed *Nemed* in the *Battle of Cennfebrat*.

Lugaid was wounded in the battle, and afterwards exiled from Ireland by his foster-father.

Spending a number of years in exile, he made an alliance with *Benne Brit* son of the king of Britain, raised an army of foreigners - Saxons and Britons - and returned to Ireland.

He defeated and killed Art in the *Battle of Maige Mucruimhe* in Connacht and took the High Kingship.

He ruled for thirty years until he was driven from the throne by Art's son Cormac mac Airt after he gave a false judgment on *Bennaid*, a female hospitaller, whose sheep had illegally grazed on the queen's woad.

He fled to Muster to seek help from his relatives.

He attempted to make peace with his foster-father, Ailill Aulom, but Ailill had not forgiven him for the death of his son Éogan Mór, and bit him with a poisoned tooth when they embraced.

He then sent the poet *Ferches mac Commáin* after Lugaid to take revenge for Éogan

*Ferches* found Lugaid standing with his back to a standing stone, and killed him with a spear.

Cormac was unable to take the throne directly, being forced to flee to Connacht by King Fergus Dubdétach of Ulster, who held the High Kingship for a year after Lugaid's death.

He had two sons, Fothad Cairptech and Fothad Airgthech, who would later be joint High Kings.

Fergus Dubdétach<sup>190</sup> ("black-tooth") son of Finnchad or Imchad son of Ogaman was a king of the Ulaid who was briefly High King of Ireland.

<sup>189</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Commodus (180-192). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 173 to 203, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 195 to 225.

<sup>190</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Commodus (180-192). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 203 to 204, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 225 to 226.

He took the High Kingship after his predecessor, Lugaid Mac Con, was expelled from Tara by Cormac mac Airt and killed by Cormac's fili *Ferches mac Commáin*.

Fergus and his two brothers, Fergus Caisfhiachlach ("rough-tooth") and Fergus Foltlebar ("long-hair"), then expelled Cormac to Connacht and Fergus took the throne.

He ruled for a year, before he was defeated by Cormac, with the assistance of *Tadg mac Céin* and *Lugaid Láma* in the *Battle of Crinna*.

Cormac mac Airt<sup>191</sup> son of Achtan daughter of Olc Acha and Art mac Cuinn son of Conn Céchathlach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.

He was famous for his wise, true and generous judgments.

Olc had offered High King Art mac Cuinn hospitality the night before the *Battle of Maige Mucruimhe* - on the plain of the counting of the pigs, in Connacht, and Cormac was conceived.

(Achtan was Art's official mistress, to whom he had given a dowry of cattle.)

Achtan had a vision while she slept next to Art.

She saw herself with her head cut off and a great tree growing out of her neck.

Its branches spread over all of Ireland, until the sea rose and overwhelmed it.

Another tree grew from the roots of the first, but the wind blew it down.

At that she woke up and told Art what she had seen.

Art explained that the head of every woman is her husband, and that she would lose her husband in battle the next day.

The first tree was their son, who would be king over all Ireland, and the sea that overwhelmed it was a fish-bone that he would die choking on.

The second tree was his son, Cairbre Lifechair, who would be king after him, and the wind that blew him down was a battle against the Fianna, in which he would fall.

The following day Art was defeated and killed by his nephew Lugaid mac Con, who became the new High King.

Cormac was carried off in infancy by a she-wolf and reared with her cubs in the caves of Kesh (Keash, Co Sligo), but a hunter found him and brought him back to his mother.

Achtan then took him to *Fiachrae Cassán*, who had been Art's foster-father.

On the way they were attacked by wolves, but wild horses protected them.

At the age of thirty, armed with his father's sword, Cormac came to Tara, where he met a steward consoling a weeping woman.

The steward explained that the High King had confiscated her sheep because they had cropped the queen's woad-garden.

Cormac declared, "More fitting would be one shearing for another," because both the woad and the sheep's fleeces would grow again.

When Lugaid heard this, he conceded that Cormac's judgment was superior to his and abdicated the throne - leaving Tara because his druids prophesied that not live another six months if he stayed.

He went to his kin in Munster, where *Ferches mac Commáin* the fili killed him with a spear as he stood with his back to a standing stone.

But Cormac was unable to claim the High Kingship, as Connacht by King Fergus Dubdétach of Ulaid, drove him into Connacht, and took the throne himself.

He turned to Tadg mac Céin, a local nobleman whose father had been killed by Fergus, promising him as much land on the plain of Brega as he could drive his chariot round in a day if he would help him claim the throne.

Tadg advised him to recruit his grandfather's brother Lugaid Láma. Cormac sought him out, and when he found him lying in a hunting-booth, wounded him in the back with a spear.

Lugaid revealed that it had been him who had killed Cormac's father in the *Battle of Maige Mucruimhe*, and Cormac demanded, as *éraic* - a form of tribute in reparation for murder or other major crimes - for Art's life, that Lugaid give him Art's head.

Having recruited Tadg and Lugaid, Cormac marched against Fergus, and the *Battle of Crinna* began.

Tadg led the battle, keeping Cormac out of the action at the rear.

Lugaid took the head of Fergus' brother, Fergus Foltlebar, and brought it to Cormac's attendant, who told him this was not the head of the king of Ulster.

He then took the head of Fergus' other brother, Fergus Caisfhiachlach, but again the attendant told him it was the wrong head.

Finally he killed Fergus Dubdétach himself, and when the attendant confirmed he'd got the right head, Lugaid killed him and collapsed from exhaustion and loss of blood.

Tadg routed Fergus' army, and ordered his charioteer to make a circuit of the plain of Brega to include Tara itself.

He was severely wounded, and feinted during the circuit.

When he came to, he asked the charioteer if he had driven around Tara yet.

When the charioteer answered no, Tadg killed him, but before he could complete the circuit himself, Cormac came upon him and ordered physicians to treat his wounds - treatment which took a whole year.

Cormac took the throne, and Tadg ruled large tracts of land in the northern half of Ireland.

Cormac married *Eithne Táebfada* daughter of Cathair Mór, foster-daughter of Bucket, a wealthy cattle-lord from Leinster whose hospitality was so exploited that he was reduced to poverty, or *Eithne Ollamda* daughter of king Dúnlaoing of Leinster.

Cormac took a second wife, *Ciarnait* daughter of the king of the Cruithne (Picts) tribes of the Dál nAraidi and the Uíbh Eachach Cobo, but *Eithne*, out of jealousy of her beauty, forced her to grind nine measures of grain every day.

Cormac freed her from this duty by having a watermill built.

Cormac had three sons, *Dáire*, *Cellach* and Cairbre Lifechair, and ten daughters.

Two of his daughters, **Gráinne** and *Aillbe*, married the hero **Fionn mac Cumhaill**.

Gráinne was betrothed to Fionn, but instead ran off with a young warrior of the Fianna, **Diarmuid ua Duibhne**.

Diarmuid and Fionn were eventually reconciled, but Fionn later contrived Diarmuid's death during a boar hunt, but was shamed by his son **Oisín** into making amends to Gráinne.

Fionn and Gráinne were married, and Gráinne persuaded her sons not to make war against Fionn.

Cormac fought many battles, subduing the Ulaid and Connacht and leading a lengthy campaign against Munster.

In the fourteenth year of his reign he sailed to Great Britain and made conquests there.

In the fifteenth, thirty maidens were slaughtered in Tara by King Dúnlaoing of Leinster, for which Cormac had twelve Leinster princesses put to death.

He was temporarily deposed twice by the Ulaid, and once went missing for four months.

<sup>191</sup> The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* synchronizes his reign with that of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180). The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 204 to 244, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 226 to 266. An entry in the *Annals of Ulster* dates his death as late as 366.

He also compiled the *Psalter of Tara*, a book containing the chronicles of Irish history, the laws concerning the rents and dues kings were to receive from their subjects, and the records of the boundaries of Ireland.

Once, having distributed all the cattle he had received as tribute from the provinces, Cormac found himself without any cattle to provision his own household after a plague struck his herds. A steward persuaded him to treat Munster as two provinces, the southern of which had never paid tax. He sent messengers to demand payment, but King Fiachu Muillethan of Southern Munster refused, and Cormac prepared for war. His own druids, who had never advised him badly, foresaw disaster, but he ignored them; preferring to listen to five druids from the *sidhe* supplied by his fairy lover, *Báirinn*.

Cormac marched to Munster and made camp on the Hill of Druim Dámhgaire (Knocklong, Co Limerick). His new druids' magic made the camp impregnable and his warriors unbeatable, dried up all sources of water used by the Munstermen, and nearly drove Fiachu to submission. But Fiachu in desperation turned to the powerful Munster druid Mug Ruith for aid, and his magic was too strong even for Cormac's fairy druids. He restored the water and conjured up magical hounds who destroyed the fairy druids. His breath created storms and turned men to stone. Cormac was driven out of Munster and compelled to seek terms.

Enmity existed between Cormac and the Déisi, "vassal" or "subject" people, descendants of Cormac's great-grandfather Fedlimid Rechtmar who had been his retainers. Cormac's son *Cellach* (or *Conn*) abducts *Forach daughter of a Déisi leader*. Her uncle Óengus Gaibúaibthach comes to rescue her, but *Cellach* refuses to release her. Óengus runs *Cellach* through with his "dread spear," which has three chains attached to it; these chains wound one of Cormac's advisors and blind Cormac in one eye. Cormac fought seven battles against the Déisi, and expelled them from their lands. After a period of wandering, they settled in Munster. Cormac, having lost an eye, moved into the Tech Cletig on the Hill of Achall, as it was against the law for a disfigured king to sit in Tara.

Cormac owned a wonderful gold cup given to him by the psychopomp Manannán mac Lir - associated with both the Tuatha Dé Danaan and the Fomhoiréans - in the Land of the Living. If three lies were spoken over it, it would break in three: three truths made it whole again. Cormac used this cup during his kingship to distinguish falsehood from truth. When Cormac died, having choked on a salmon bone, because of a curse laid upon him by an angry druid for his having converted to Christianity, the cup vanished, just as Manannán had predicted it would.

Mug Ruith ("slave of the wheel") was a powerful blind druid of Munster who lived on Valentia Island, County Kerry. He could grow to enormous size, and his breath caused storms and turned men to stone. He wore a hornless bull-hide and a bird mask, and flew in a machine called the *roth rámach*, the "oared wheel." He had an ox-driven chariot in which night was as bright as day, a star-speckled black shield with a silver rim, and a stone which could turn into a poisonous eel when thrown in water.

The fili attributed the druid with extraordinary longevity (he lived through the reign of nineteen kings).

He was a student of Simon Magus the Sorcerer in the Holy Land at the dawn of Christianity, who taught him his magic skills and helped him build his flying machine.

As the executioner who beheaded John the Baptizer, he brought a curse to the Irish people.

Tlachtga *daughter of Mug Ruith* was a powerful druidess. She accompanied her father on his worldly travels, learning his magical secrets and discovering sacred stones in Italy.

She was raped by the three sons of Simon Magus, her father's mentor, and returned to Ireland where she died giving birth to triplets on the Hill of Ward, (*near Athboy, Co Meath*), twelve miles from the Hill of Tara.

A major ceremony held at Tlachtga was the lighting of the winter fires at Samhain (November 1). The festival lasted for several days and centered on the Tuatha Dé Danaan god Lugh.

Tlachtga died of grief and a ringfort was constructed on her grave.

*The medieval tribe of the Fir Maige Féne were descended from him.*

## vii

Cormac mac Airt was succeeded as High King of Ireland by Eochaid Gonnat<sup>192</sup> ("wounding") *son of Fiach son of Imchad son of Bresal son of Sirchad son of Fíatach Finn mac Dáire, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Espáine*.

He ruled for a year, before falling in battle.

His killer was either *Lugaid mac Lugna, Lugaid Menn son of Óengus, or Lugna Feirte*.

He was succeeded by Cormac's son Cairbre Lifechair.

Cairbre Lifechair<sup>193</sup> ("lover of the Liffey"<sup>194</sup>) *son of Cormac mac Airt grandson of Conn Cétchathlach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Espáine*, was a High King of Ireland.

He came to the throne at the death of Eochaid Gonnat.

During his time King *Bresal Belach* of Leinster refused to pay the *bórama* or cow-tribute to the High King, but Cairbre defeated him in the *Battle of Dubchomar*, and from then on exacted the *bórama* without a battle.

Cairbre married *Aine daughter of Fionn mac Cumhaill*.

During his reign, his sons *Fíacha Sroiptine* (or *Sraibhtine*) and *Eochaid Doimién* killed *Óengus Gaibúaibthach*.

To make peace, Cairbre betrothed his daughter, *Sgiam Sholais*, to a Déisi prince.

However, the Fianna demanded a tribute of twenty gold bars, which they claimed was customarily paid on such occasions.

Cairbre decided that the Fianna had become too powerful, and raised a huge army from Ulster, Connacht and Leinster against them.

They were joined by *Goll mac Morna* and his followers, who turned combat against Fionn's grandson *Oscar*, who died of his wounds shortly afterwards.

*Fionn himself had either died in battle, or had been killed on the River Boyne the previous year.*

The only survivors of the Fianna were *Oisín son of Fionn mac Cumhaill and Sadhbh daughter of King Bodb Derg of the Sid of Munster son of Eochaid Garb or the Dagda - one of the chieftains of the Tuatha Dé Danaan and Fionn's nephew, Caílte mac Rónáin son of Oisgen or Conscen son of Dobrút the Smith of Múscairge son of Cumhall mac Trénmóir's daughter*.

<sup>192</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 244 to 245, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 266 to 267.

<sup>193</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 245 to 272, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 267 to 284.

<sup>194</sup> The Liffey is a river in Ireland, which flows through the center of Dublin. It was previously named *An Ruirtheach*, meaning "fast (or strong) runner." The word *Liphe* (or *Life*) referred originally to the plain through which the river ran, but eventually came to refer to the river itself.

Cairbre ruled for seventeen, twenty-six or twenty-seven years. He was succeeded by Fothad Cairpthech and Fothad Airgthech, ruling jointly.

• • •

Caílte mac Rónáin was a member of the Fianna. He could run at remarkable speed and communicate with animals.  
Oisín was the greatest poet of Ireland, and a warrior of the Fianna.

Fothad Cairpthech ("chariot-fighter") and Fothad Airgthech<sup>195</sup> ("ingenious" or "plundering") sons of *Lugaid Mac Con* son of *Mac Niad mac Lugdach*, prince of the Dáirine or Corcu Loigde and *Sadb ingen Chuinn* daughter of Conn Céchtathlach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, were joint High Kings of Ireland. They came to throne on the death of Cairbre Lifechair.

They ruled a year, until Fothad Airgthech killed his brother, and was himself killed by Caílte mac Rónáin of the Fianna, and the followers of Cairbre's son Fiacha Sroiptine (Sraibhtine), in the *Battle of Ollarba*.

Fíacha Sroiptine (Sraibhtine)<sup>196</sup> son of Cairbre Lifechair, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland.

Fíacha's son, Muiredach Tirech, commanded his armies, as the king himself was not allowed to go into battle.

Muiredach once led a victorious expedition to Munster.

The three Collas - Colla Uais, Colla Fo Chri and Colla Menn - sons of Fíacha's brother Eochaid Doimién - gave battle to Fíacha while Muiredach and his army were still in Munster.

Fíacha's druid, Dubchomar, prophesied that if Fíacha was to defeat the Collas, none of his descendants would ever rule Ireland, and likewise, if the Collas won, none of their descendants would be king after them.

Fíacha was defeated and killed in the *Battle of Dubchomar*. He had ruled for 31, 33, 36 or 37 years.

Colla Uais<sup>197</sup> son of Eochaid Doimién son of Cairbre Lifechair great-grandson of Conn Céchtathlach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland. His given name was Cairell.

He and his two brothers, Muiredach (Colla Fo Chri) and Áed (Colla Menn), were known as the three Collas.

The three Collas plotted against their uncle, High king Fíacha Sroiptine (Sraibhtine) of Ireland.

It was prophesied that whoever killed him, his descendants would never rule Ireland.

While Fíacha's son Muiredach Tirech was campaigning in Munster with his army, they defeated Fíacha in the *Battle of Dubchomar*, and Colla Uais took the throne.

He ruled for four years, until Muiredach overthrew him, took the throne, and exiled him and his brothers, with three hundred men, to Alba (originally meaning Britain, later Scotland).

Their mother was Ailech daughter of King Udaire of Alba, and they took service with their grandfather for three years.

After that they returned to Ireland, hoping that Muiredach might kill them, and deprive his descendants of the throne.

But Muiredach knew the prophecy, and despite knowing they had killed his father, took them into his service.

<sup>195</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates their reign from 272 to 273, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 284 to 285.

<sup>196</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 273 to 306, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 285 to 322.

<sup>197</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates Colla Uais' High Kingship from 306 to 310, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* dates his High Kingship from 322 to 326, and his destruction of Emain Macha and conquest of Ulster to 331.

After several years, Muiredach decided that the Collas should win sword-land of their own, and sent them to conquer Ulster. With an army drawn from Connacht, they fought seven battles in a week against the Ulaid in the *Battle of Achaidh Leithdeircc*, killing King Fergus Foga of Ulster in the seventh. Colla Menn also died in this battle. They burned Emain Macha, the Ulster capital (*near the present city of Armagh*), after which the famous palace of the Ulster kings was abandoned, which had stood for six centuries, and seized substantial territories in Ulster, which they wrested from the princes of the race of Ir, called Clanna Rory, or Rudercians - the origin of the kingdom of Airgáilla i which was henceforth for a thousand years to play an important part in the history of Ireland. The sovereignty of Ulster thus passed from the race of Ir to the race of Heremon.

Muiredach Tirech<sup>198</sup> son of Fíacha Sroiptine (Sraibhtine), a descendant of Conn Céchtathlach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland. He was overthrown by Caelbad.

Caelbad<sup>199</sup> son of Cronn Bradruí, a descendant of Cú Chulainn's foster-father, Conall Cernach son of Amergin mac Eccti the fili (Amhairghin of the Tuatha Dé Danaan) son of Eccti Salach the smith and Findchóem, sister of King Conchobhar mac Nessa of the Ulaid, and wet nurse of Cú Chulainn, was the ancestor of the kings of the Cruithne tribes of the Dál nAraidi and the Uíbh Eachach Cobo.

He gained the High Kingship by overthrowing Muiredach Tirech, but only lasted a year before he was overthrown by Muiredach's son Eochaid Mugmedon.

He married Céindi and had one son, Condla, by her - ancestor of George I of England, Scotland and Wales.

Eochaid Mugmedon<sup>200</sup> (d. 362) son of Muiredach Tirech, a descendant of Conn Céchtathlach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was a High King of Ireland. He is best known as father of Naill of the Nine Hostages, a High King of Ireland and ancestor of the Uí Néill and Connachta dynasties.

Muiredach was overthrown and killed by King Caelbad of Ulster, but Caelbad only ruled one year before Eochaid killed him and took the throne.

He extracted the *bórama* or cow-tribute from Leinster without a battle. However, he was defeated in the *Battle of Cruachan Claonta* by King Énnae Cennsalach of Leinster grandson of King Bressal Béalach of Leinster - founder of the Uí Ceinnselaig sept<sup>201</sup> of the Laigin, and first cousin of Dúnlaoing mac Énda Niada, eponymous ancestor of the rival Uí Dúnlaoing.

Eochaid had two wives: Mongfind ("fair hair" or "white hair") daughter of Fidach son of King Dáire Cerbba of Medón Mairtine - who was born in Mag Breg (Brega), who bore him four sons: Brión, Ailill, Fiachrae and Fergus. And Carthann Cas Dubh ("curly-black (hair)") daughter of the Romano-Briton King Sachall Balb (the Stammer) of the Saxons, who bore him his most famous son, Naill.

<sup>198</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 310 to 343, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* dates his High Kingship from 326 to 356.

<sup>199</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 343 to 344, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* dates his High Kingship from 356 to 357.

<sup>200</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 344 to 351, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* dates his High Kingship from 357 to 365. Daniel P. McCarthy, based on the *Irish Annals*, dates his death to 362.

<sup>201</sup> A division of a family, especially Scottish or Irish [ ] which may indicate the descendants of a person.

When Cairenn was pregnant with Niall, Mongfind was jealous and made her do heavy labour, hoping to make her miscarry. She gave birth besides a well as she was drawing water, and, out of fear of Mongfind, left the baby exposed to the birds, but the baby was rescued and raised by the fili Torna Éices - the last great bard of Pagan Ireland. When Niall grew up he returned to Tara and rescued his mother from the servitude Mongfind had placed her under - *and went on to become a High King.*

King Brión mac Echach Muigmedóin of Connacht *son of Eochaid Mugmedon, a descendant of Conn Céchathlach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Espáine*, was the eponymous apical ancestor of the Uí Briúin - giving rise to many Kings of Connacht and its ruling families over the next thousand years.

Seeing Niall's popularity among the nobles, Mongfind demanded that Eochaid name a successor, hoping that it would be one of her sons. Eochaid gave the task to Sithchenn, a druid, who devised a contest between the brothers, shutting them in a burning forge, and judging them based on which objects they chose to save. Niall, who emerges carrying an anvil, is deemed greater than Brión, with a sledgehammer, Fiachrae with bellows and a pail of beer, Ailill with a chest of weapons, and Fergus with a bundle of wood. Mongfind refused to accept the decision.

Sithchenn took the brothers to the smith, who made them weapons, and sent them out hunting. Each brother in turn went looking for water, a found a well guarded by a hideous hag who demanded a kiss in return for water. Fergus and Ailill refuse and return empty-handed. Fiachrae gives her a quick peck, but not enough to satisfy her. Only Niall kisses her properly, and she is revealed as a beautiful maiden, the Sovereignty of Ireland. She grants Niall not only water but her name, *Alexi*, and the kingship for many generations - *twenty-six of his descendants would be High Kings of Ireland.* Fiachrae was granted a minor royal line - *two of his descendants, Nath Í and Ailill Molt, would be High Kings.*

After ruling for seven or eight years, Eochaid died of an illness at Tara. Mongfind wanted her favorite son, Brión, to succeed Eochaid but upon his death, war broke out with her step-son Niall Noígíallach (of the Nine Hostages). When she realized the war was not going in her favour she arranged for her brother Crimthann Mór to become High King and sent Brión away to learn soldiering.

King Crimthann Mór mac Fidaig<sup>202</sup> of Munster *son of Fidach son of King Dáire Cerbba of Medón Mairtine*,<sup>203</sup> was a High King of Ireland.

His wife was *Fidheang daughter of an unnamed king of Connacht.*

Crimthann Mór built a great fortress in Cornwall known as *Dind Tradú* (fortress of the three ramparts). (However after 410, Cornwall reverted to rule by Romano-Celtic chieftains of the Cornovii tribe as part of Dumnonia.)

Crimthann Mór and the early Uí Liatháin may have belonged to the Attacoti (c. 368) - a people who despoiled Roman Britain between

<sup>202</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 351 to 368, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* dates his High Kingship from 365 to 376.

<sup>203</sup> Medón Mairtine - the ancient capital of the Mairtine, a once prominent Érainn people of late prehistoric Munster, who belonged to an early peripheral branch of the Éoganachta, who by early historic times completely vanished from the Irish political landscape.

364 and 368, along with Scotti, Picts, Saxons, Roman military deserters, and the indigenous Britons themselves.<sup>204</sup>

Crimthann Mór was a notorious sea-raider (in 369) and had gained territory in Britain and Gaul - and was a King of Alba (*originally meaning Britain, later Scotland*), as well.

On Brión's return after seven years, while Crimthann Mór was away on tour of his lands in Scotland, Mongfind's sons seized Ireland. Crimthann Mór returned to Ireland intending to give battle.

Mongfind, purporting to make peace between her brother and her sons, held a feast, at which she served Crimthann Mór a poisoned drink in the attempt to have the kingdom for Brión.

But Crimthann Mór refused to drink it unless she did too; so she tasted the same poisonous drink in order to lull any suspicion and induce her brother to drink, and died soon after at Samhain, becoming a goddess of sorcery - or a bean sidhe (banshee).

Prayers were offered to Mongfind on Samhain eve.

While on his continued travels through the kingdom of Munster, Crimthann, having drunk the poison, came to *Sliebh Uidhe on Riogh* "The Mountain of the King's Death" (now Cratloe Hill, Co. Clare) and there died. A cairn was hastily made for him.

Niall of the Nine Hostages<sup>205</sup> *son of Carthann Cas Dubh daughter of the Romano-Briton King Sachall Balb (the Stammer) of the Saxons and Eochaid Mugmedon, a descendant of Conn Céchathlach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Espáine*, acquired the throne and became the High King of Ireland.

As High King of Ireland, Niall reigned from the ancient Irish royal seat at Tara. During his reign he conquered all of Ireland and Scotland and much of England and Wales.

He took a royal hostage from each of the nine kingdoms he subjugated.<sup>206</sup>

He gave each son a territory to govern.

Niall brought Saint Patrick - not an active believer - to Ireland as a slave at the age of sixteen, and held him for six years.

While in captivity, he worked as a shepherd and strengthened his relationship with God through prayer eventually leading him to convert to Christianity.

After six years of captivity, he heard a voice telling him that he would soon go home, and then that his ship was ready.

Fleeing his master, he traveled to a port, two hundred miles away, where he found a ship and with difficulty persuaded the captain to take him [to Britain].

Niall made Brión his champion and levier of his rents and hostages. Brión seized the throne of Connacht leading to war with his brother Fiachrae mac Echach Muigmedóin - ancestor of the Uí Fiachrach dynasties of Connacht.

<sup>204</sup> The marauders were defeated in 368 by Count Flavius Theodosius the Elder, a senior military officer serving in the Western Roman Empire and the father of the Roman Emperor Theodosius I the Great.

<sup>205</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 368 to 395, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* dates his High Kingship from 376 to 405. The *Annals of the Four Masters* dates his accession to 378 and death to 405. Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* [ ] associates his raiding activities in Britain with the kidnapping of Saint Patrick.

<sup>206</sup> The saga "*The Death of Niall of the Nine Hostages*" says that he received five hostages from the five provinces of Ireland (Ulster, Connacht, Leinster, Munster and Meath), and one each from Scotland, the Saxons, the Britons and the Franks. Keating says that he received five from the five provinces of Ireland, and four from Scotland. T. F. O'Rahilly suggests in "*Early Irish History and Mythology*" that the nine hostages were from the kingdom of Airgíalla (literally "hostage-givers"), a satellite state founded by the Uí Néill's conquests in Ulster, noting that the early Irish legal text *Lebor na gCeart* ("The Book of Rights") says that the only duty of the Airgíalla to the King of Ireland was to give him nine hostages.

Brión defeated Fiachrae in the *First Battle of Damchluain* (near Tuam, Co Galway) who was taken captive to Tara as a prisoner of Niall.

But Fiachrae's son Nath Í rallied forces and defeated Brión who was slain in the *Second Battle of Damchluain*. Brión was buried at Ross Camm.

Fiachrae was released and given Brión's position as champion and levier of his rents and hostages and became the new king of Connacht.

With his brother Ailill mac Echach Muigmedóin - ancestor of the Uí nAilello dynasty of Connacht, which sank into obscurity at an early age - he then went to take hostages from Munster, defeating King *Eochaid mac Crimthann* of Munster and won great spoil and hostages.

Fiachrae was severely wounded in battle and died shortly afterwards at *Ferrach* in Míde (Meath). The hostages of Munster were buried alive with him as a tribute to him.

After Fiachrae's death, the Munstermen renewed the battle, Ailill was captured and cut to pieces by *Eochaid mac Crimthann*, and war continued between Munster and Connacht for many years.

There was war between King Énnae Cennsalach of Leinster over the bórama or cow-tribute first imposed on Leinster by Tuathal Techtmar.

Énnae Cennsalach's son *Eochu* was refused hospitality by Niall's chief druid, the fili Laidcenn mac Bairchid. He made war and destroyed the poet's stronghold, killing his son *Leit*, after he had used defamatory language against him.

Laidcenn responded by satirizing Leinster so that no corn, grass or leaves grew there for a year.

This lead Niall to harry Leinster, and peace was concluded on the condition that *Eochu* was handed over.

Niall chained *Eochu* to a standing stone, and sent nine warriors to execute him, but *Eochu* broke the chain and killed all nine of them with it.

He then killed Laidcenn by throwing a stone which lodged in his forehead.

Niall exiled him to Scotland. *Eochu* took refuge with King Erc of Dál Riata.

Niall made war in Europe as far as the Alps, and the Romans sent an ambassador to parley with him.

Later, *Eochu* killed Naill with an arrow - on the Ictian Sea (the English Channel) - on his return form a raid on Brittany, in the north-west of France.

Niall's son *Fergus* avenged his father by killing *Eochu*.

Niall's men carried his body home, fighting seven battles on the way, and his foster-father Torna Éices the fili died of grief.

Niall's body was buried at *Ochann*, now known as *Faughan Hill at Jordanstown*, a few miles west of Navan in County Meath.

Niall was succeeded by his nephew Nath Í.

Ennæ's son Crimthann mac Énnai also became a king of Leinster. Another son *Fedelmid* was the ancestor of the Uí Felmeda branch of the Uí Ceinnselaig.

King Erc of Dál Riata son of *Eochaid Muinremuir* was the father of Fergus Mór mac Eirc and Loarn mac Eirc - and may have been the great-grandfather of Muirchertach mac Muiredaig (Mac Ercae) of the Uí Néill, a High King of Ireland, from his mother Erca daughter of Loarn mac Eirc of Dál Riata.

Muirchertach mac Ercae spent time with Loarn mac Eirc, his uncle, before murdering him by setting him on fire.

King Loarn mac Eirc of Dál Riata was the eponymous ancestor of the Cenél Loairn.

King Fergus Mór mac Eirc the Great of Dál Riata was also known as *Mac Nisse Mór*.

He was allowed to settle in Scotland as a federate of King Arthur of Britain, as a bulwark against the Picts.

Fergus Mór was the first Scot to rule Scotland - and King Cináed mac Alpin (Kenneth MacAlpin An Ferbasach ("the Conqueror")) of the Picts, founder of the Kingdom of Alba, first king of the Scots, was his descendant.

He brought the Stone of Scone<sup>207</sup> - the Coronation Stone (of Destiny) - with him from Ireland.

Fergus Mór mac Eirc, with the people of Dál Riata, held part of Britain, and he died there - being succeeded by a son named Dúngal.

x

High King Niall of the Nine Hostages had two wives: *Innē daughter of Lugaid*, who bore him one son, Fiachu; and *Roighnech ingen Mead*, who bore him seven sons: Lóegaire, Éndae, Máiné of Tethba, Eógan, Conall Gulban, Conall Cremthainne and Coirpre.

These sons are eponymous ancestors to the various Uí Néill dynasties: Eógan of the Cenél nEógain and Conall Gulban of the Cenél Connail, making up the northern Uí Néill; Fiachu of the Cenél Fiachach dynasty; Lóegaire (the king who Saint Patrick converted) of the Cenél Lóegaire; Máiné of Tethba of the Uí Máiné; Conall Cremthainne of the Clann Cholmáin and the Síl nÁedo Sláine; and Coirpre of the Cenél Coirpri, making up the southern Uí Néill.

Famous descendants include Saint Columba, Saint Máel Ruba, the Kings of Ailech, the Kings of Tir Eogain, and the Kings of Tir Conaill.

The lands of the Uí Néill were conquered by Naill of the Nine Hostages and his sons, together with their allies.

Conall Cremthainne (d. 480), also known as Conall Err Breg son of *Roighnech ingen Mead* and Niall Noígíallach son of Carthann Cas Dubh daughter of the Romano-Briton King Sachall Balb (the Stammer) of the Saxons and *Eochaid Mugmedon*, a descendant of Conn Cétchathlach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, was the first king of Uisneach in Míde.

The Hill of Uisneach, located in present-day County Westmeath, is where all the five provinces met.

Saint Patrick blessed Conall and rejected his brother Coirpre mac Néill at a meeting at Taitiu.

Through his son Fergus Cerrbél, he was ancestor of the Clann Cholmáin and the Síl nÁedo Sláine. Fergus Cerrbél was the father of High King Diarmait mac Cerball of Ireland.

Another son, Ardgal mac Conaill (d. 950), was ancestor of the Cenél Ardgail in Co. Meath. Ardgal mac Conaill was the third king of Uisneach.

Fiachu mac Néill (fl. 507-514) son of Innē daughter of Lugaid and Niall Noígíallach son of Carthann Cas Dubh daughter of the Romano-Briton King Sachall Balb (the Stammer) of the Saxons and *Eochaid Mugmedon*, a descendant of Conn Cétchathlach, a descendant of Éremón son of Míl Éspáine, succeeded his brother King Conall Cremthainne of Uisneach.

Saint Patrick visited Fiachu and his brother Éndae at Uisneach.

Fiachu refused baptism from the saint [at Carn] and his son killed one of Patrick's followers, causing the saint to curse Uisneach.

<sup>207</sup> The Stone of Scone - an oblong block of red sandstone that was used for centuries in the coronation of the monarchs of Scotland, and later monarchs of England and the Kingdom of Great Britain. Its size is about 26 inches (660 mm) by 16.75 inches (425 mm) by 10.5 inches (270 mm) and its weight is approximately 336 pounds (152 kg). A roughly incised cross exists on one surface, and an iron ring at each end aids in transportation.

Fiachu conquered Meath with King Failge Berraide, eponymous ancestor of the Leinster dynasty of the Uí Failgi (of Offaly), as his opponent. In 507 Fiachu was defeated by Failge at the *Battle of Frémainn* (*Frewin Hill, near Mullingar, Co. Westmeath*). Fiachu had a false prophecy that he would win this battle and desired revenge. In 514 he achieved his revenge by defeating Failge at the *Battle of Druim Derg*. By this victory the plain of Míde was taken away from the Laigin and Fiachu conquered the territory from Birr to Uisneach in County Westmeath.

Fiachu was the ancestor of the Cenél Fiachach, later named Geoghegan,<sup>208</sup> whose lands extended from Birr to Uisneach in southern Westmeath and part of north Offaly and their southern territory became known as *Fir Cell* (land of the churches), and later the Barony of Moycashel. His son Túathal established a northern branch and his son Úathnemenn a southern branch. Another son Crimthann was great-grandfather of a local saint Áed mac Brigg (d. 589).

King Ardgall mac Conaill (d. 520) of Uisneach in Míde of the Uí Néill dynasty *son of Conall Cremthainne son of Naill Noígíallach* was slain in the *Battle of Detra* in Druimne Breg by King Colgu of the Airthir of Airgíalla and the High King Muirchertach mac Muiredaig of Ireland on the Louth-Meath border which points to the origins of the family of High King Diarmait mac Cerbaill of Ireland in the territory north of the Boyne and Blackwater. Ardgall's descendants were known as the Cenél nArdgail - situated among the Luigne in Co. Meath.

Eógan mac Néill (d. 465) *son of Roíghnech ingen Mead and Niall Noígíallach* was an Irish king who founded the kingdom of Ailech, later Tír Eoghain (modern County Tyrone).

He was ancestor of the Cenél nEógan dynasty and their septs. His sons were: Muiredach mac Eógan, his successor in Ailech; Fergus, founder of Cenél Fergusa; and Echach Binnich, founder of Cenél mBinnin.

Eógan mac Néill was a friend of Saint Patrick, the "Apostle of Ireland" - and received the Saint's blessing.

A succession dispute broke out upon the death of King Amalgaid mac Fiachrae (d. 440) of Connacht, of the Uí Fiachrach sept, *son of Fiachrae mac Echach Muigmedóin son of Eochaid Mugmedon, a descendant of Conn Cétchathlach, a descendant of Éremón son of Mil Éspáine, in Tír Amhlaidh* in northwest Connacht between his sons Óengus and Éndae.

Saint Patrick arranged for King Lóegaire mac Néill of Tara (d. 462) and his brother King Eógan mac Néill of Ailech to mediate the dispute.

Éndae had his son Conall baptized and given to Patrick's service for his support.

Erca daughter of King Loarn mac Eirc of Alba married King Muiredach mac Eógan of Ailech (d. c. 489) *son of Eógan mac Néill son of Niall Noígíallach*, head of the Cenél nEógan branch of the northern Uí Néill - who took their name from the Grianán of Ailech, a hillfort on top of Greenan Mountain in modern County Donegal.

Their son was Muirchertach mac Muiredaig (d. 532), also known as High King Muirchertach mac Ercae of Ireland, was founder of the Cenél maic Ercae branch. Other sons included: Feradach, founder of the Cenél Feradaig branch; Moen, founder of the Cenél Moen branch; and Tigernach, founder of the Cenél Tigernaig branch.

Muiredach mac Eógan reigned 24 years as the king of Ailech from 465 to 489.

King Conall Gulban *son of Roíghnech ingen Mead and Niall Noígíallach* founded the kingdom of Tir Chonaill.

He was murdered by the Masraige ("Beautiful Lords" or "Lords of Death"), a vassal Fir Bholg tribe inhabiting Magh Slécht (the plain of prostrations) (Co. Cavan) in 464.

He was buried by Saint Caillín *son of Dediva daughter of Tren son of Dubhthach moccu Lughair, (who was Chief Ollamh of Ireland and royal poet of High King Lóegaire mac Néill)*.

He was the first nobleman baptized by Saint Patrick thus opening the way for the conversion of the ruling classes of Ireland.

His brother Eógan mac Néill died of grief over his brother's death the next year.

His sons included: Fergus Cendfota, Daui (founder of the Cenél nDuach) and Énna Bogaine (founder of the Cenél nBogaine).

Coirpre mac Néill (fl. 485-493) *son of Roíghnech ingen Mead and Niall Noígíallach* was perhaps leader of the conquests that established the southern Uí Néill in the midlands of Ireland.

He was an enemy of Saint Patrick - and his descendants were cursed at Taitiu by the saint so that none would become High King of Ireland.

Garrchú mac Fothaid was the founder of the Dál Messin Corb dynasty's principal sub-sept, the Uí Garrchon.

King Fincath mac Garrchu of Leinster (d. 485) *son of Garrchú mac Fothaid* was a member of the Dál Messin Corb dynasty's principal sub-sept, the Uí Garrchon.

He was killed in the *First Battle of Grainaret* (Granard, County Longford) in 485 by the Uí Néill. Coirpre mac Néill was probably the victor.

He was succeeded by his son Fráech mac Finchada.

King Fráech mac Finchada (d. 495) of Leinster *son of King Fincath mac Garrchu of Leinster* was a member of the Dál Messin Corb dynasty's principal sub-sept, the Uí Garrchon. He ruled from 485 to 495.

The Dál Messin Corb were a ruling dynasty of Leinster along with the Dál Chormaic. They were descended from Messin Corb *son of Chú Chorb* - and were the last of the Dumnonians (the Fir Domnann).

The Leinstermen were defeated in the *Battle of Taillten* in 494 by Coirpre mac Néill - associating the Uí Néill with the conquest of Brega and the taking of Taitiu.

In 495 Fráech was defeated and slain by Eochu mac Coipri at the *Second Battle of Grainaret* (Granard, County Longford) in Tethba.

Coirpre mac Néill recorded victories over the Leinstermen at Taitiu in the years 494 and 496 - later site of Óenach Taillten.

Two further victories were recorded at the *Battle of Slemain of Míde* (probably near Mullingar, County Westmeath) in 497, and at the *Battle of Cend Ailbe* (perhaps somewhere in County Carlow) in 499.

Cormac Cáech *son of Coirpre mac Néill* was the father of High King Túathal Máelgarb of Ireland - despite the curse of Saint Patrick at Taitiu that none of Coirpre's descendants would become a King of Tara.

<sup>208</sup> It is claimed in the early 15th-century manuscript *An Leabhar Breac* ("Speckled Book") that the Geoghegans are not descended from Fiachu *son of Niall*, but from *Fiachu son of Aedh*, a plebeian. This claim so enraged the descendants of Fiachu, that they killed the author of the passage, even though he was under the protection of Suanach, the abbot of the monastery of Rahin.

King Feradach Dathi of Connacht (d. 445), also known as Nath Í mac Fiachrach<sup>209</sup> son of Fiachrae son of Mongfind daughter of Fidach son of King Dáire Cerba of Medón Mairtine and Eochaid Mugmedon, a descendant of Conn Céchtathlach, a descendant of Éremón son of Mil Éspáine, acquired the throne and became the High King of Ireland.

He was named Dathi ("quick") for the speed he put on his armour. He made foreign conquests and died after being struck by lightning in the Alps. A standing stone marks his grave - part of the Rathcroghan complex of archeological sites near Tulsk in County Roscommon.

Lóegaire mac Néill son of Roighnech ingen Mead and Niall Noígíallach son of Carthann Cas Dubh daughter of the Romano-Briton King Sachall Balb (the Stammer) of the Saxons and Eochaid Mugmedon, a descendant of Conn Céchtathlach, a descendant of Éremón son of Mil Éspáine, great pagan Emperor of the Irish, acquired the throne of Tara and became the High King of Ireland.

Saint Patrick came to Ireland in Lóegaire's reign and met with him. But Lóegaire was an adversary of Saint Patrick.

Lóegaire's son **Lugaid mac Lóegairi** served the same adversarial role.

## UNFINISHED

### IV. The Semi-Historical High Kings of Ireland

## UNFINISHED

i

## UNFINISHED

Muirchertach mac Muiredaig (Mac Ercae)

## UNFINISHED

### XXXI. Fergus mac Róith

I

i

**Fergus mac Róith** son of Róith and Ross the Red, a king of Ulster.

Ross the Red married Maga, daughter of Oenghus Mac in Og, and became the father, by her, of a giant by the name of Fachtna who, in turn, married Nessa and became the father of **Conchobhar mac Nessa**.

However, Maga also married the druid Cathbhadh and subsequently became the mother of Findchóem and her sisters, Elva and Deichtine and grandmother of several other heroes of Ulster, including Cú Chulainn, the sons of Uisneach and Conall Caernach. Maga is also the mother of Cet and Anluan...

Uisneach was a member of the Red Branch;

he was the husband of Elva, the daughter of Cathbhadh and Maga, and the father of Naoise, Ardán and Ainnle, the cousins of Cú Chulainn.

ii

### Cet and Anluan

Brothers Cet and Anluan were warriors of Connacht.

They were invited by Medbh and Ailill mac Máta to participate in the hunt for the Donn Cuailngé (brown bull)...

**Mac Dá Thó** was king of Leinster at the time that Medbh was queen of Connacht.

He owned a fine hound and huge boar, and many of his neighbours coveted these animals, including Medbh and Conchobhar mac Nessa, king of Ulster.

Mac Dá Thó promised both these rulers that they could have the hound, and slaughtered the boar to provide a feast, to which he invited them. Fighting broke out between the Ulster king and the men of Connacht, but the later soon retreated.

When the hound, over which they had been quarreling, ran after the king's chariot his charioteer cut off its head.

At a feast Cet claimed the right to carve the boar of Mac Dá Thó and cruelly derided all those who sought to challenge him until Conall Caernach arrived - to whom he quickly gave way and yielded the honour to him.

However, Cet taunted Conall Caernach saying that had his brother Anluan been present he would have given him a run for his money. Conall Caernach then removed the bloody head of Anluan from a pouch and threw it onto the table in front of Cet.

Fighting broke out between the Ulster king and the men of Connacht, but the later soon retreated.

When the hound, over which they had been quarreling, fled the scene and ran after the king's chariot - his charioteer cut off its head.

Mac Dá Thó did indeed escape the quarrel, but by promising his dog to both monarchs he lost not only that dog, but also his marvelous pig.

II

Fergus mac Róith is perhaps best known as the leader of the Red Branch - the collective name given to the heroes at the court of Conchobhar mac Nessa.

They were so called because the room they used for their meetings within the palace at Emhain Mhacha was coloured red.

He was one of the three heroes dispatched by Conchobhar mac Nessa to offer a truce to Naoise, Ardán, Ainnle and Derdriu who had fled there after Derdriu, the betrothed of Conchobhar mac Nessa, forced Naoise to elope with her.

The other two heroes who went were Dubthach and his son Cormac mac Dubthach.

However, unaware of the treachery that awaited their return, the exiles traveled back to Ireland with the three messengers.

When the three returned with the exiles, Fergus mac Róith was placed under bond to spend the night feasting with Baruch, another member of the Red Branch and close ally of Conchobhar mac Nessa,

thus keeping him away from Emhain Mhacha where Conchobhar mac Nessa intended to kill the three sons of Uisneach.

Conchobhar mac Nessa then broke his word, and had Eoghan mac Durthacht and his company kill the three young sons of Uisneach.

<sup>209</sup> The chronology of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* dates his reign from 395 to 418, that of the *Annals of the Four Masters* dates his High Kingship from 405 to 428.

Outraged by this deceit, Fergus mac Róith, Dubthach and Cormac mac Dubthach attacked and razed Emhain Mhacha, killing 300 of the men of *Ulster* in the process, before defecting to Ailill mac Máta and Medbh of *Connacht*, the traditional enemies of Conchobhar mac Nessa.

Dubthach was the owner of a spear that had to be kept in a brew of soporific herbs, if it were not to fly forth on its own, eager for massacre.

### XXXII. Bodb Dearg

i

Bodb Dearg was chosen to be the king of the Tuatha Dé Danaan after the death of the Dagda, although this choice upset Lir, who had been neither consulted nor considered.

To compensate Lir, Bodb Dearg gave Lir one of his daughters, Aobh, to be his wife.

She bore him four children, two boys and two girls, before dying.

Bodb Dearg then gave Lir his other daughter, Aoife, but she grew jealous of her step-children and changed them into swans,

a form in which they would remain for 900 years.

For her evil, Bodb Dearg cursed Aoife and turned her into a raven or, as some say, a "demon of the air."

Later tradition says that she had been turned into a crane, which was killed by Manannán mac Lir who used the skin to make a bag in which he kept all his treasures.

ii

Some sources name a third daughter of Bodb Dearg as Saar, and make her the wife of Fionn mac Cumhaill and mother of Oisín.

## UNFINISHED

### XXXIII. Caratacus

## UNFINISHED

### XXXIV. Molmutius

## UNFINISHED

### XXXV. Lludd and Llefelys

## UNFINISHED

### Part the Fifth

## UNFINISHED

### Epona

## UNFINISHED

### Addendum

## ?. Culhwch and Olwen

i

Culhwch was the son of *Kildydd*, one of King Arthur's knights, and *Goleuddydd*, the sister of *Igraine* (*Eigyr*) and the aunt of King Arthur.

During the course of her pregnancy, *Goleuddydd* lost all reason and aimlessly wandered around the countryside.

As the first pains of labour started, her sanity restored, although this happened while she was standing in the middle of a herd of swine. So shocked was *Goleuddydd* by her returning senses that she immediately delivered the child, a boy, who was named Culhwch to commemorate the place of his birth, for in Welsh *hwch* means "pigs." After *Goleuddydd* died, *Kildydd* remarried - although the name of his second wife remains unknown.

His stepmother hated Culhwch so much that she placed a curse on him that he could marry only *Olwen*, the daughter of *Yspaddaden*, the chief giant, or *Penkawr*, a girl whom the warrior came to love dearly.



Culhwch and his companions go onto the offensive

Culhwch set out on his quest to locate the girl and formed a party, each chosen for a particular skill, to help him.

The members of this party were *Cei*,<sup>210</sup> *Bedwyr*,<sup>211</sup> *Cynddylig the Guide*, *Gwyar the Interpreter* and his son, *Gwalchmai fab Gwyar*,<sup>212</sup> and *Menw fab Teirgawaedd*.

*Cei*'s talents were his ability to stay for nine days and nights without breathing or sleeping and to change his height at will.

In addition his body temperature was so high that never got wet, and during the cold his companions could kindle a fire from him.

*Bedwyr* was chosen because, even though he only had one hand, he was still faster with his sword than three others who fought together.

*Bedwyr*'s father was named *Pedrawd*, whose own father was also known as *Bedwyr*.

*Bedwyr* had two children by an unnamed wife, a son *Amren* and a daughter *Eneuavc*.

<sup>210</sup> Cei later reemerged under the guise of Sir Kay in the Arthurian legends.

<sup>211</sup> Bedwyr reemerged in the later Arthurian legends as Sir Bedivere.

<sup>212</sup> Gwalchmai fab Gwyar later resurfaced in the Arthurian cycle as the knight Sir Gawayn.

*Menw fab Teirgawaedd* was chosen for his mastery of magic, which would preserve the party in foreign and heathen lands because he could render them invisible.

At length the party came to a shepherd whose wife proved to be the aunt of Culhwch.

Although she had lost twenty-three of her twenty-four sons to *Yspaddaden*, she vowed to help Culhwch meet Olwen, who came to wash her hair at the women's cottage every Saturday.



Culhwch at Yspaddaden's court.

Image by E. Wallcousins in "Celtic Myth & Legend", Charles Squire, 1920.

"Horses shall I have, and chivalry; and my lord and kinsman Arthur will obtain for me all these things. And I shall gain thy daughter, and thou shalt lose thy life."

Culhwch

"Go forward...and when thou hast compassed all these marvels, thou shalt have my daughter for thy wife."

Ysbaddaden

Olwen came as the woman had said that Saturday, and when she met Culhwch she agreed to become his wife on condition that he ask her father for her hand, warning him not to flinch from any condition he might set.

Culhwch's next problem was how to persuade her giant father to agree to the match.

On three successive days Culhwch and his companions went to *Yspaddaden's Castle*.

Like the Irish Cyclops Balor, *Yspaddaden's* eyelids needed to be levered up with supports in order for him to see Culhwch.

Also like Balor, the Welsh giant did not favour the idea of his daughter marrying a man. *Yspaddaden* was upset by the obvious affection between Olwen and Culhwch.

On each occasion the giant told them to come back the following morning and, as they turned their backs on the castle, hurled a **poisoned stone** at Culhwch and his companions, but they were always too quick and managed on each occasion to catch it and throw it back.

On the fourth day, when Culhwch finally put out one of the giant's eyes with a return throw, *Yspaddaden* agreed to the marriage on condition that Culhwch perform thirty-nine impossible tasks.<sup>213</sup>

Among other things, Culhwch had to uproot a forest, burn the wood for fertilizer and plough the cleared land in one day; to force Amaethon, the god of agriculture, to nourish its flax crops; to make the smith god *Govannon* forge tools for the work; bring four strong oxen to help; obtain magic seed; provide honey nine times sweeter than that of a virgin swarm; get a magic cup and a hamper of delicious meat; borrow the drinking-horn of the underwater king *Gwyddbwyl* and the magic harp belonging to *Teirtu* (an instrument that played itself);

capture **the birds of Rhiannon**, whose song could wake the dead and lull the living to sleep, provide a magic cauldron; a boar's tusk for the giant to shave with and shaving cream made from a witch's blood; steal a magic dog, leash and collar; hire as a huntsman **Mabon**,<sup>214</sup> son of the goddess *Modron*, who had first to be released from prison; find a wonderful steed and swift hounds. and persuade a number of unlikely guests to come to *Yspaddaden's* stronghold.

As *Yspaddaden* mentioned each task, he added that it would be impossible to fulfill.

Culhwch, remembering the advice of Olwen, simply replied that he could accomplish any task with ease.

Undaunted by the sheer size and complexity of the challenges, Culhwch said that "King Arthur will provide horses and men to help him win Olwen."

He also informed the giant that he would return and slay him.

With the assistance of King Arthur's men and a couple of divine allies, Culhwch successfully completed these trials.

ii

Mabon had been abducted when only three nights old and imprisoned

at *Caer Loyw (Gloucester)* - a location symbolizing the otherworld.

Mabon was worshipped as the god of liberation, harmony, unity and music.

However, since only he was able to control the hound which Culhwch needed [ ] an expedition was mounted to release Mabon.

Once free, he duly helped to capture the enchanted boar **Twrch Trwyth** - one of his hardest tasks:

King Arthur's war-band assisted Culhwch in the retrieval of a comb, razor and scissors from between the ears of the terrible, enchanted boar **Twrch Trwyth**.

**Twrch Trwyth** was a king who was turned into a gigantic boar for his wickedness.

Between his ears he kept three treasures: a comb, a pair of scissors and a razor.

<sup>213</sup> The longest series of tasks in Celtic mythology.

<sup>214</sup> Mabon may have been a former god, possibly Maponos, a Gaulish god of youth. The Romans knew of Maponos, whom they equated with Apollo Citharoedus, the lyre player. Like Maponos, Mabon appears in the Arthurian cycle with various other names, such as Mabuz and Mabonagrain. His Irish equivalent was Oengus Mac in Og.

The boar had already killed a great number of men before Culhwch caught up with it.

Running it down, Mabon skillfully snatched the razor from between the boar's ears, while *Cyledyr the Wild* obtained the shears.

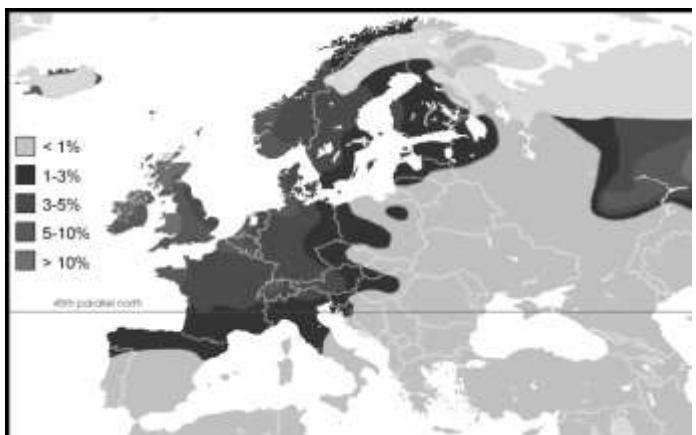
The wild boar evaded them for a while, but they managed to find it again and procure the comb.

They then forced the boar to jump off a cliff into the sea, when it swam away, never to be seen again.

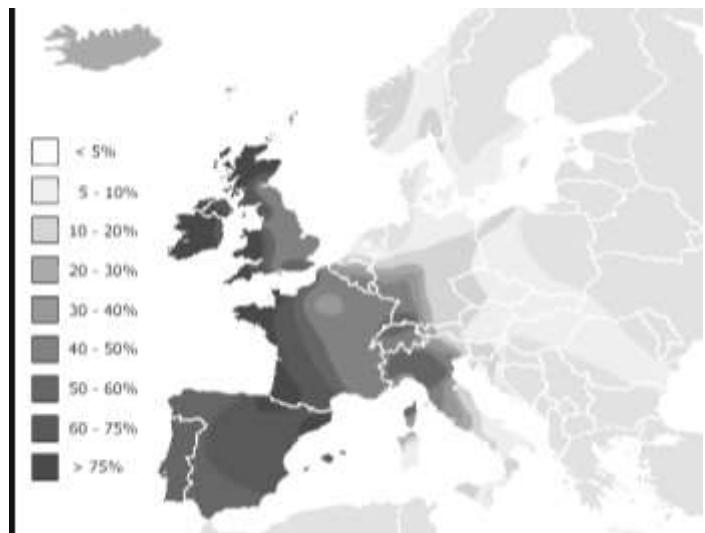
Finally, unable to endure any more of the giant's conditions, Culhwch rounded up all of *Yspaddaden*'s enemies and stormed his castle. *Yspaddaden* was killed by Goreu, one of Culhwch's fellow knights.

Culhwch then married fair Olwen "and she was his only wife as long as he lived."

And the two remained faithful to each other throughout their lives.



Distribution of haplogroup red hair in Europe



Distribution of Celtic paternal lineages in Europe

## List of Kings of the Picts



### I. Legendary Origins of the Picts

i

Now after the Deluge the world was divided into three *parts*; between

the three sons of Noah, *viz.*, Eoraip, Affraic, and Asia.

Shem was in Asia; Cham in Affraic; Japheth in Eoraip.

The first man of the race of Japheth that came into Eoraip at the beginning was Alanius, with his three sons; *viz.*: Iascon, Gothus or Armion, and Negua.

Iascon had four sons: Francus, Romanus, Britus, and Albanus.

Now Armion had five sons: Gotas, Uilegotas, Cebetus, Bergandus, and Longobardus.

Negua had three sons: Vandalus, Saxo, and Boarus.

It is from Saxo *son of Negua* that the Saxons are descended; but it is from Britus *son of Iascon* that the Britons *come*.

The first who possessed Alban was Albanus *son of Iascon* and *brother of Britus* - the eponymi of the "fair-haired" Albani - and from him Alban of ships has its name:

From these Albani both Sots and Picts derive their origin.

The Albani were neighbours to the Amazons.

*The Goths are thought to be named after Magog son of Japheth, whom the ancient Greeks called Gatae, rather than Goths.*

The Picts occupied Britain north of the Antonine Wall, although *in fact* there never was a race or tribe called the Picts. The name was one that was applied to them from outside.

They took their name, which is unknown in their own language, from the Celtic word *Cruithne* for *Pict* which means "painted bodies"; that is because, using sharp iron tools and ink, they are marked by blue woad tattoos of various shape.

They were an amalgam of northern Celts of various waves plus earlier indigenous peoples of Britain. Celtic tribes were predominant below the Antonine Wall.

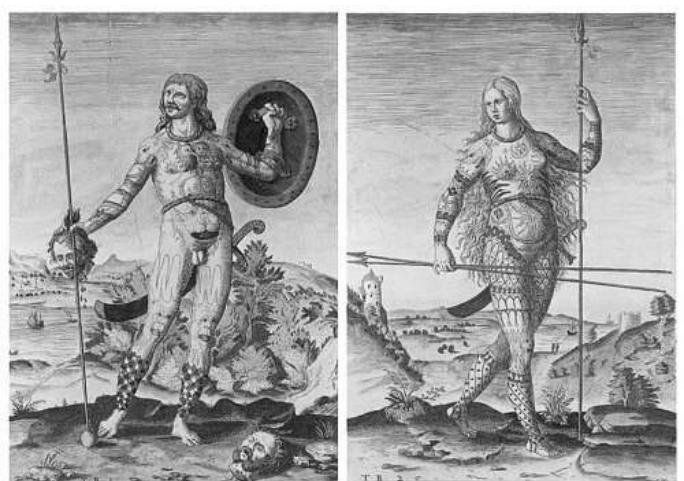
The Scots are {as it were} *called Sciti*, because they came from the Scythian region, and had their origin there - taking their name from Scota<sup>215</sup> *daughter of Pharaoh Nectonibus*, who was the Queen of the Scots.

(The Britons took possession of Britain in the third age of the world, however, the Scots took possession of Scocia, that is Ireland, in the fourth age.)

Albanus *son of Iascon* was banished by his brother across the Muir n-Icht, or Straits of Dover, and Britus possessed it as far as the promontory of Fotudain.

Long after Britus the Clanna Neimheadh or Nemidians possessed it - establishing a colony in Dobhar and Iardobhar in North Alban. The Cruithnigh then came from Ireland to possess it. Seventy kings from Cathluan, the first king, to Constantine, the last, possessed the Cruithnian plain.

They were followed by the three sons of Erc *son of Eochaidh*.



<sup>215</sup> There were two Egyptian princesses named Scota: Scota *daughter of Pharaoh Cingris* lived at the time of Moses; another, Scota *daughter of Pharaoh Nectonibus* was married to Gallam, called Miledh.

The Picts called themselves Albani after Alba, the oldest name for Britain, while the Irish called them Cruithne (Picts), the Celtic inhabitants of Scotland and the only Britons never to be conquered by the Romans.

They are generally subdivided into two groups:

The Northern Picts, *also known as Caledonii*, after the Celtic tribe inhabiting the area at the time of the Roman conquest in the first century AD, inhabited northern Scotland north of the Grampian Mountains with the exception of the Orkneys, Caithness, the Outer Hebrides and the land west of Drumalban or Dorsal ridge of Britain occupied by the Scots of Dálriada. Their administrative center was Inverness.

The Southern Picts or Maetae, occupied the area south of the Grampian Mountains to the Forth. Their capital was Fortrenn.

*ii*

Afterwards came a retinue of eight, with a fleet, and dwelt in Erin (Ireland), and took possession of a great part of it.

The Firbolg, moreover, took possession of Manand (the Isle of Mann) and certain islands in the Western Isles in like manner: Ara and Illa and Rechra.

### *Legendary Kings of the Picts*



Cruithne son of Cinge

The children of Gaileóin *son of Ercol Hercules* took possession of the islands or Orcc (Orkney),  
that is Historend *son of Historrim* *son of Agam* *son of Agathysri*,  
and were dispersed again from the islands of Orcc;

that is, **Cruithne son of Cinge (Kinne)** *son of Luctai son of Partholón son of Historech or Agnoiun son of Buain son of Mais son of Fathect son of Japheth son of Noah*, the eponymous of the Picts, went and took possession of the far-north of the island of Britain (Alba) in the 1st or 2nd century BC; he was the father of the Cruithneach (Picts of Northern Ireland) - and he ruled all Pictland for a hundred years. These are the seven sons of Cruithne, *viz.*, Fidaich, Cé, Fótla, Circinn, Fortriu, Fiobh, Caith; and they divided the land into seven divisions; and Onbecan *son of Caith* *son of Cruithne* took the High Kingship of the seven divisions - and the name of each man was given to their territories. Finnachta was High King of Ireland at that time.

Five of these divisions can still be identified: Fótla was given Athfoitile (the fjord of Fótla), now corrupted to Atholl, and Gowrie; Circinn is Caithenesia or Caithness (and Sutherland); Fortriu was given the district between the rivers Forth and Tay - Strathearn and Menteith; Fiobh was given Fife; Crig was given Angus and the district of Mearns,, a name corrupted from Maghigirginn (Magh Circinn, i.e. the plain of Circinn), now Kincardineshire.

The only one to remain in Scotland was **Caith** *son of Cruithne*, who ruled Caithness, Sutherland, the West Highlands and the Northern and Western Isles for twelve years - the rest went to France.

*iii*

Cinge of the Picts was father of King Cruithne of Scone. The sister of King Cruithne of Scone *son of Cinge of the Picts* was the mother of *Gede Ollogothach*.

**Fidaich** (Moireabh) mac Cruithne "the Woodsman" *son of Cruithne* reigned 40 years (in Moray, Nairn and Ross).

**Cé** (Ce, Kay) mac Cruithne *son of Cruithne* reigned 15 years (in Mar and Buchan, Banff and parts of Aberdeenshire).

**Fótla**<sup>216</sup> (Fotla, Fotlaig, Floclaid) mac Cruithne *son of Cruithne* reigned 30 years (in Atholl and Gowrie).

**Circinn** (Cicircum) "crest-headed" or Crig (Cirech, Circui) *son of Cruithne* reigned for (40 or) 60 years (in Angus and the Mearns). There was also Crus *son of Cirech* who was a warrior of the Picts. The *Battle of the Plain of Circin* was fought against the Scots.

**Fortriu** (Fortreim, Fortrend) mac Cruithne *son of Cruithne* reigned 70 years (in Strathearn and Menteith).

**Fiobh** (Fibaid) mac Cruithne *son of Cruithne* reigned 24 years (in Fife and Kinross).

**Caith** (Cat or Got) mac Cruithne *son of Cruithne* reigned 22 years (in Caithness).

The seven sons were followed by **Gede Ollogothach** *mac Fiobh son of a daughter of Cinge of the Picts*, whose name is the same as one of the seven kings of the descendants of Ir, who occupied the throne of Ireland.

Gede Ollogothach reigned 80 years. He was father of Denbecan (or Oenbecan).

Then **Denbecan** (or Oenbecan) *mac Fiobh* and Olfinechta *mac Fiobh* - and Denbecan (or Oenbecan) *son of Caith* *son of Cruithne* took sovereignty of the seven divisions, and reigned 100 years;

**Olfinechta** reigned 60 years;

<sup>216</sup> **Fódla** *daughter of Ernmas* was one of the tutelary goddesses of Ireland. Her husband was Téther Mac Cácht of the Tuatha Dé Danaan *son of Cermaíl Milbél (honey-mouthed) son of the Dagda*.

**Ernmas** was a Mother Goddess of the Tuatha Dé Danaan. She was killed during the *First Battle of Magh Tuireadh*.

and Finachta *son of Denbecan (or Oenbecan)* was ruler of Erin (Ireland) at that time, and took hostages of the Cruithneach. He also is one of the seven Irian Kings.

Finechta reigned sixty years. He was father of Guidid Gaed Brechach.

**Guidid Gaed Brechach** *mac Fiobh, id est Geis* - a woodsman - reigned fifty years. He was father of Gest Gurcich.

**Gest Gurcich** *mac Fiobh* reigned 40 years. He was father of Wurgust (or Urges).

**Wurgust** (Wergest) (or Urges) *mac Fiobh* reigned 30 years. He was father of Urpant.

Urpant was father of Urleo.

Urleo was father of Urgant.

Urgant was father of Ginith.

Ginith was father of Urfeichir.

Urfeichir was father of Urkel.

Urkel was father of Urfcint I.

Urfcint I was father of Urfeth.



Urfeth *wife of Bruide Ru of Scone (Picts)* was father of Urero.

Urero *wife of Bruide Gart of Scone* was father of Urgart.

Urgart *wife of Bruide Cinid* was father of Urcinit II.

Urcinit II *with of Bruide Uip* was father of Uruip.

Uruip [ ] was father of Gurith.

Gurith *wife of Bruide Mund* was father of Gilgidi.

Gilgidi [ ] was father of Calgacus, brother of Gede (Gud), the First King of the Picts.

**Bruide pont** (Brudebout mac Fibaid), ruled for 48 years; *thirty kings* of them ruled Hibernia (Ireland) and Albania, or Erin(Ireland) and Alban, and Bruide was the name of each one of them, and of the divisions of the other men. They possessed an hundred and fifty years, as it is in the books of the Cruithneach:

Bruide pant, Bruide gant, Bruide fecir, Bruide cint, Bruide ru, Bruide cinid, Bruide grid, Bruide urpant, Bruide urgant, Bruide urfecir, Bruide urcint, Bruide 'eru, Bruide urcind, Bruide urgrid, Bruide leo, Bruide gnith, Bruide cal, Bruide fet, Bruide gart, Bruide utgart, Bruide uip, Bruide mund, Bruide Bruide urleo, Bruide urgnith, Bruide urcal, Bruide urfet, Bruide uruip, Bruide urmund - twenty eight of them.

Moreover, very soon after the invasion of the Gaedhel (Scots) or the sons of Míl, five of the Cruithneach of the islands of Orcc, *viz.*, five brothers of the father of Cruithne, went to the Franks (France) and founded a city there, *viz.*, Pictavis (Poitiers) or Inpictus (that is, from their tattoos),

and came again to the island of Erin, where they were for a long time, till the Gael drove them across the sea to their brethren.

The descendants of Liathan *son of Ercal* took the territory of the Dimeti and Guer and Guigell, until Cunedda with his sons expelled them from the Britons.

iv

The Cruithnigh (Picts) came from the land of Thracia (Thrace); that is, they are children of Gleoin *son of Ercol Hercules*. Agathyrsi was their name.

Six brothers of them came at first, *viz.*, Solen, Ulfa, Nechtan, Drostan, Aengus, Leithenn.

The cause of their coming: They were at free quarters in the country, engaged in the service of King Policornus of Thrace, an effeminate Prince, who forged a design of violating the chastity of their chief's daughter without giving a bride-price (or dower), a virgin of the most exquisite beauty.

But her father, Gud (*also known as Gede or Gilgidi*), a man of the nicest feelings of honour, with a mind sensitively alive to the foul disgrace intended for his darling child, resolved to save her from contamination, even at the risk of his own life.

Making known the criminal designs of the king, to some of his friends, they felt so strong a sympathy in his cause, that they assisted him to dispatch the libidinous tyrant in his own palace. As soon as this dewed was accomplished, they fled the country to evade punishment.

They traveled - a company of nine ships in good order, three hundred and nine persons - through the Roman domains of several Princes until they reached France, whose king, on hearing the cause of their flight from their own country, took them into his service,

and assigned them lands, on which they built a city, from thence called Pictavium, *now Poictiers*.

The French Monarch, led no doubt by curiosity, paid a visit to the young damsel, whose captivating charms had the same effect on his heart as they produced on that of the Thracian king - and he sought to have her for a concubine;

but the chaste lady took an early opportunity of appraising her father of the passion of the French Monarch, conjuring him, at the same time, to remove her from the influence of that regal contagion which threatened death to her virtue.

As soon as he heard this, he again formed the determination of flying from the danger that menaced his daughter's honour.

Thus - after the death of Leithenn - resolved, he and his friends seized on a small portion of the French fleet, with which they hastily put to sea, and succeeded, after a favourable voyage over the ocean, being driven by strong winds outside all the boundaries of Britain, in gaining the Irish coast.

But in their course thither, after two days, lost the beauteous fair one, who was the sole cause of all their wanderings and solicitude.

Her dread of dishonour and the intense agony which perturbed her heart, preyed so much on her spirits as to produce a rapid consumption which hurried her to a watery grave, in the sixteenth year of her age.

They landed in their long vessels in the county of Wexford - putting into port at Innbhearr Sláinghe in the harbour of Loch Garman - in Hy- Ceinnscalagh.

King Criomhthann Sciathbheal ("Shield-Mouth") of horses of the Laigin (the people of Leinster), and ruler of the warriors of the Gaileóin, who, at that time, held the sovereignty of Leinster form Héremón (Éremón or Ériehamhón) *son of Míl Espáine* (*and great-grandson of King Breogán of Celtic Galicia*), came to meet them there, and entered into friendship with them.

The leaders of that fleet were Gud and his son Cathluan; and the reason why Criomhthann entered into friendship with them was because some British nobles, who were called Tuatha Fiodhgha

(and Fothmaind), were making conquests in the Fotharta on either side of the mouth of the Slaney.

Such were these people that the weapons of every one of them were poisoned, so that, be the wound inflicted upon them small or great, no remedy whatever availed the wounded man, but he must die.

Bright-speared Criomhthann heard that there was a skillful druid called Trostan among the Cruithnigh who could furnish himself and his people with an antidote against the sharp poison with the weapons of the Tuatha Fiadhgha were wont to be charges; and he asked Trostan what remedy he should use against the poison of the weapons...

"If you desire their swift killing this is their subduing, their beheading:

Get thrice fifty gentle white hornless milch-cows milked," said Trostan, "and let the milk got from them be placed in a hollow in the middle of the plain in which you are wont to meet them in battle, and offer them battle on that same plain; and let each one of your followers who shall have been wounded by points or blades of the giant people go to the hollow and bathe, and he will be healed from the venom of the poison."

Criomhthann did as the druid had advised... over which the druid's incantations were recited.

The Picts being brave soldiers, enlisted themselves under the banner of Héremón, with whom, in conjunction with his own troops, he attacked a predatory expedition of the Tuatha Fiadhgha, who had just landed in his dominions,

and every one of the Leinstermen and the Picts whom they wounded lied down in the new milk, and the poison of the weapons of the Tuatha Fiadhgha did not injure any of them;

and they succeeded in totally defeating and beheading the British invaders - the giants of high Banbha - at the bloody *Battle of Ard-Leamhnacha* (or "New-milk Hill"), in the southern country - in Munster - in Hy-Ceinnscalagh.

The Picts, that is Gud and his son Cathluan, were emboldened by the services which they rendered Héremón on this occasion, to solicit, confidently, an asylum in his kingdom.

But even at this early age, the Island was fruitful and lovely but so thickly inhabited that the monarch, though willing, found himself unable to grant their request.

The Picts, however, were determined to effect by treachery what they could not obtain by entreaty.

They conspired, and entered into a collusion with the disgraced Dumnonii, which was conducted with the utmost secrecy... resolved to invade Leinster.

The Picts were first discovered [ ] however, that Héremón received timely notice of their concerted designs to subvert his government, and took, accordingly, the promptest measures to crush the unorganized embryo of sedition.

Héremón assembled a numerous army, and went to meet them.

Baffled in their treasonable projects, and sensible of the danger to which they were exposed, the Picts quickly sued for peace in the most supplicating manner.

Héremón, whose magnanimity was equal to his valour, conquered his just resentment, and yielded to their entreaties.

At their own urgent request he told them that there was a country to the north-east of Ireland and permitted them to go over to North Britain, where they purposed to make a settlement which should be ever after subject to the Irish crown.

To attest the sincerity of their intentions, and to guarantee for the faithful observance of their engagements, Cruithnechan *son of Cinge or son of Lochit son of Ingi* went over with twice eighteen soldiers of the tribes of Thracia from the sons of Mileadh to the Britons of Fortrenn to fight against the Saxons (in Germany); and he defended the country of Cruithentuaith for them, and he remained with them... and they made their children and their swordland among the Britons subject to them - first Magh Fortrenn, and then Maghgirginn.

But they had no women, for the womenfolk of Alba had died.

Cruithnechan solicited the monarch for permission to form matrimonial alliances with some of the noble marriageable Irish women he had with him, pledging themselves in the most solemn manner by the sun and the moon, by the stars, by the earth, by the dew of the elements, by the sea and the land, guaranteeing that the sovereignty of the land of Cruitheantuath, *which is now called Alba*, should be held by right of the female rather than that of the male progeny to the end of the world,

and their children alone, should be only entitled to succeed to their inheritance - a mark of such striking distinction, that it cannot be paralleled in the history of any other nation under the sun.

To this stipulation the king adhered, giving them thrice fifty maidens of Erin that were superabundant with the sons of Mileadh - some of those wives of the leaders who had come with him from Spain, whose husbands were drowned in the western sea along with Donn at the Dumachs;

and three of those women were: the wife of Breas, the wife of Buas, and the wife of Buaidhne.

As soon as the king's consent was obtained, the *temple of Hymen* was crowded with votaries.

And their children and offspring increased, and the people multiplied.

And Alban was without a king all that time, till the period of Gud, the first true king after the sons of Cruithne who possessed all Alban by consent or force.

Others say that it was Cathluan *son of Caitmind* who possessed the kingdom by force in Cruithentuaith and in Erin for sixty years, and that after him Gud possessed for a hundred and fifty years.



Trostan the Druid

Gud being dead, the compact was made with his son Cathluan, and from whom the Picts were also called Caledones; i.e., the prosperity of Cathluan.

Cathluan, who was supreme leader, took one of these women to wife, namely, the wife of Breas; and after that they proceeded to Cruitheantuath; and Cathluan conquered that country, and was the first king of Alba of the race of Cruithnigh.

There were seventy kings of the Cruithnigh or Picts on the throne of Alba after him.

And from the period of its ratification, to the days of *Saint Colum-Kille*,<sup>217</sup> the Apostle of the Picts, the Caledonians were tributary to Ireland.

But Trostan the Druid and five others stayed in Ireland, and got lands from Héremón in the Plain of Breaghmuigh in Meath. The five others were: Soilen, Ulpia, Neachtain the noble, Aónghus, and Leathan.

From them are every spell, and every charm/amulet, and every *sreod* (prophetic sneeze), and augury of birds, and every omen, every work that is made.

Cathluan was sovereign over them all, and he was the first High King of the Cruithnigh who ruled over Alba.



Brigantes Warrior

The Brigantes, or Clanna-Breogum, also obtained permission from Héremón to pass over to Britain, and settled in Cumberland, or the country of hills and valleys, from which they received, in common with the Welsh, the appellation of Cumri.

The fourteenth year after the death of Eibhear, Héremón, who eminently united the skill of the general, the bravery of the hero, and the wisdom of the sage, to the profound knowledge of the statesman, was removed by death from the scene of his glory and usefulness, shortly after the departure of the Picts.

<sup>217</sup> Saint Columba (Irish: *Colm Cille*, "church dove," 7 December 521 - 9 June 597) was an Irish abbot and missionary who was highly regarded by both the Gaels of Dál Riata and the Picts, and is remembered today as a Christian saint and one of the Twelve Apostles of Ireland. Columba was born to Fedlimid and Eithne of the Cenél Conaill in Gartan, near Lough Gartan, in modern County Donegal, Ulster in the north of Ireland. On his father's side he was great-great-grandson of Niall of the Nine Hostages.

After a glorious reign of thirteen years, Héremón died at Airgeadros at Raith Beitheach, besides the Feoir, and there he was buried. The same year the river called the Eithne burst over the land in Uí Néill; and the river called Freaghobhal burst over the land between Dál nAruidhe and Dál Raida. Héremón left his throne to his three sons: Muimhne, Luighne and Laishne.

v

The two valiant sons of Cathluan *son of Gub* were Catinoladar the hard knobbed and Catinolachan the bright knobbed. The two champions, Im *son of Pern* and Cinge - *the father of Cruithne*; Crus *son of Cirigh*, their soldier; Uaisnemh, their seer; Cruithne *son of Loichtet son of Cinge*, their artisan.

Domnall mac Alpin was their leader, till Britus *son of Isacon son of Alanius son of Fethuir son of Ogaman son of Tai son of Boidhbh son of Semoibh son of Athacht son of Aoth son of Abar son of Raa son of Asra son of Iobaith son of Ioban son of Japheth son of Noah* slew him.

The clan of Neimheadh possessed after Britus, *viz.*, Iarglun. The Cruithneach possessed after that, after they had come from Erin. The Gael possessed after that, *viz.*, the sons of Erc *son of Eochaidh*.

The three sons of Héremón succeeded to the monarchy [ ] and agreed that each should govern for a year. Muimhne, the eldest, enjoyed it the first year. Luighne succeeded, in whose administration Muimhne died; and in that of Laishne, the sons of Heber raised a mighty army, with which they engaged the Imperial troops, in the *Battle of Ard-Ladhran*, in the county of Wexford. In this engagement the sons of Héremón fell, and their army received a complete defeat.

## II. List of the Kings of the Picts

i

### Legendary Kings of the Picts

**Gede** (Gilgidi, Gud, Gede Ollogothach), king of the Cruithneach, was the first true king after the sons of Cruithne - he reigned 150 years over Ireland and Alba (Scotland).

"The voices of all sounded as the music of the harp to each other, so great was the peace in his reign."

Galgacus, flourished 80.

**Tharain** (Tarain)<sup>218</sup> reigned 100 years.

**Morleo** (Murleo) reigned 15 years.

**Deocillimon** (Deocilunon, Duchil) reigned 40 years.

**Cinioiod** mac Artcois (Cimoiod filius Arcois, Cimoiod mac Airtcois) *son of Artcois* reigned 7 years (in the early 3rd century). Cinioiod is *perhaps* an earlier form of Ciniod.

His father may have been Argentocoos the Caledonian, flourished 208.

**Deoord** (Deort), 50. Or, Derordegele (Duordegall, Duordegal, Dinortechest) reigned 20 years. Or, Derothet (Deokleth), 60 years.

<sup>218</sup> **Taranis** was the Celtic god of thunder worshipped essentially in Gaul, Gallaecia, Britain and Ireland, but also in the Rhineland and Danube regions.

**Bliesblituth** (Blieb'lith, Blieblith, Bliciblitterith) reigned 5 years.

**Dectotr'ic frater Dui** (Deotortereic frater Tui) reigned 40 years. Or, Tethothrecht (brother of Diu) reigned 60 years.

**Usconbutus** (Usconbest, Combust, Cumbust, Foscombust) reigned 20 or 30 years.

Between 80 and 82, the Roman Governor of Britain led two invading columns into Lowland Scotland, with (*probably*) the Twentieth (previously based at Glevum in **Dobunni Britons** territory) and Ninth Legions meeting up at Inveresk (near Edinburgh) in the territory of the **Votadini Britons**. The force set up permanent garrisons in its wake.

The following year, the Forth-Clyde line was fortified, *perhaps* slightly south of the later Antonine Wall and edging into the territory of the **Venicones** - a Celtic tribe located in Fife (*now in Scotland*) and on both banks of the Tay.

In 82, the Romans secured the western coast up to the Clyde to contain the tribesmen there (the British Damnoni, the ancient Selgovae - an Iron Age Celtic people, and the northern tribe of Novantae Britons) and *perhaps* to prevent Irish landings.

In 83 and 84, within the Pictish (northern British) heartland, firstly north of the Firth of Forth (in 83) and then at Mons Graupius (or Mons Grampius, in 84), the Romans under Governor **Agricola** won victories over *what they called* the Caledonides led by **Calgucus** - to prevent an attack by the Caledonians.

In the first year the Ninth Legion was surprised by a night attack.

The following year, the Roman fleet went along the coast to spread terror, accompanied by British allies.

The decisive *Battle of Bennachie Mountain* in Aberdeenshire was fought - *possibly* involving the Creones (Britons) and their neighbours along the western coast.

Between 85 and 88, a large number of Caledonians who had escaped after the battle, left the Agricola and his replacement, *probably* Governor Sallustius Lucullus, continued securing the exits of the Highland glens along the east coast.

But between 86 and 88, many forts were dismantled, *possibly* due to troop shortages while Rome was fighting in the Dacian War. Apart from some watchtowers, the main Roman forces retired to the Tyne-Solway line.

Between 90 and 556, Pictland was obscured from history by Roman rule in Britain, by its exclusion from the Roman Empire and absence of internal writings.

During this period the tribal holdings (*possibly* in several major groups) gradually coalesced to re-emerge into history as two distinct kingdoms - North and South - the latter of which was formed of *about* five occasionally feuding sub-kingdoms.

Between circa 100 and 105, the northern Brigantes (Britons) revolted, *perhaps* under the leadership of King Arvirargus, who burnt an auxiliary fort at Corsopitum, as well as others, as the British tribes of Lowland Scotland staged a minor uprising.

By 100, the Romans gave up Scotland, and fully established their defenses along the Tyne-Solway line.

**Carvorst** (Crautreic, Crutbolc) or Karanethrecht (Karanochrecht) (Fevanacherthe) reigned 40 years.

Hadrian's Wall was built along the already-established Tyne-Solway line.

**Deo ardivois** (Deordiuios) reigned 20 years.

Between 140 and 143, the Romans moved north to the Forth-Clyde line, roughly the southern Pictish boundary, reoccupying British Lowland Scotland and beginning construction of the more basic Antonine Wall.

It was around this time that the geographer, Ptolemy, notes the tribes to the north of the wall - one-or-two of the tribes may have been created by refugees fleeing the Roman invasion of the south.

The tribes mentioned include: The Caereni (Britons), Caledoni (along either side of Loch Ness southward from the Moray Firth to Ben Nevis), Carnonaces (Britons), Cornavii (*possibly* formed by members of the Midlands Cornovii (Britons) tribe fleeing from the south), Creones (Britons), Decantae (on the western side of the mouth of the Moray Firth, *possibly* formed by fleeing Cantii (Britons)), Epidii, Lugi, Smertae, Taexalli, Vacomagi (on the eastern side of the mouth of the Moray Firth) and Venicones (a Celtic tribe located on the peninsula between the Firth of Tay and the Firth of Forth, *possibly* refugee Veneti (Belgae) from the Continent).

**Vist** (Uist, Foist) reigned 50 years.

**Ru**, reigned 100 years.

In 197, the tribes north of the Forth-Clyde line *had by now* coalesced into two main bodies, the Caledonii and the Maeatae - the latter lived close to the Antonine wall, north of the Forth-Clyde isthmus.

By 206, the Roman Governor of Britain, L Alfenus Senecio, had some military success in the region.

King Argentocoxos ("silver-limbed") of Fib was, *possibly*, king of all Picts.

Between 209 and 211, Roman Emperor Severus led a campaign ion person against the Caledonii and Maeatae - the later could be a southern grouping of British and Pictish tribes.

A scorched earth policy was pursued to try and bring the ephemeral tribesmen either to a pitched battle or to surrender - neither of which *actually* occurred.

Following Severus' death, either immediately or shortly afterwards, Rome permanently abandoned Scotland - *possibly in stages*.

**Gartnait I Bolgh** (Gartnaith Loc, Gartnait Bolc, Gartnait Ini, Gernarg Bolg, Garnathbolus, Grcrnath, Gamaldebgold) reigned (4 or) 9 years - in the early 4th century.

[Four other kings named Gartnait follow - reigning 9 years in total.]

Gartnait Ini reigned 9 years.

**Breth mac Buthut** (Brude filius Buthut, B. mac Buthud, B. mac Buithed) reigned 7 years. He flourished 330. (*He is thought to be the Brutus of Geoffrey of Monmouth.*)

Between 305 and 306, Roman Emperor Constantius Chlorus did much the same as Serverus before him, personally leading a campaign into Caledonia to bring the elusive tribes in the Highlands to battle and ensure a period of renewed peace.

In 310, the *Panegyrici Latini Veteres*, or *Panegyrics*, which praised the later Roman emperors, carried the first known use of the word "Picts" to describe the British tribes of the far north of the country, meaning the Caledones *and others*.

*ii*

**Vipof namet** (Wipoig namet) or Vipoguenech (Vipognameht) (Ui poignaviet, Uipo ignauit, Poponeuet, Wmpopwall, Verpempnet) reigned 30 years (312-342).

**Fiacha Albus** (Fiacua Albus, Fyahor Albus) or Fiachna La Blank reigned 30 years.

**Canutulachama** (Canutulahina, Canutulacma, 3 years) or Canatulmet (Tonaculmet, Canatumel, Calnatuhel) reigned 4 (or 6) years (or 5 years or 1 year) (342-345). This name is *probably* connected with Cathanalachan *son of Cathluan*.

At the start of 360, Roman Caesar Julian (the Apostate) was wintering in Lutetia Parisiorum (the early Paris) when reports reached him that the Scotti and Picts had broken a previous agreement (*perhaps* made in 343) and were plundering lands close to the frontier, *presumably* those of the Novantae (Britons) and the Iron Age Selgovae (Solway).

**Donarmahl** (Douernach) Uetalec (Dornornauch Nerales) reigned 2 years.

In 364, the Picts, Scotti, Saxons, and Attacotti attacked Roman Britain in a serious incursion.



By the fourth century AD, the predominant race in northern Scotland were the Picts

**Ururadec Uetla** (Wradech Uecla, Uradach Uetla) ("White Hero") or Feradach Finlegh (Feradach Fyngal, Feredak Filius) (or Stradach Fингел) or Feradach Uecla Findlaech reigned 2 years (345-347). Ururadec and Feradach are variant forms of the same name. This person may well be King Feradach of the Picts, who figures in the story of *Corc son of Lugaid*, a prince of Munster - his reign would seem to be not long after AD 400.

In 367, the Picts now divided into two main people, the Dicalydonae and the Verturiones, were part of the ***Barbarian Conspiracy*** that saw Britain attacked from several sides at once.

**Gartnait II Diuperr** (Gartnaich Diuberr, Gartnait Duipier) or Garnad Dives (Canath Dives, Gauich Dives) (or Garnard le Riche) (or Garnaichdi uber) reigned 40 (or 60) years - in the late 4th century (347-387).

*iii*



### Historical Kings of the Picts

In 382 the Picts *again* invaded Britain but were defeated by the Roman commander, Magnus Maximus.

Between circa 384 and 390, warfare flared up between the Picts and Britain *again*, and lasted for many years.

**Keother** ruled until 388.

**Talorc I mac Achiuir** (Balarg), 75 years; or Talarg filius Keother, 25 years - from 387 or 388 to 412 or 413. Talorc I was a quasi-historical king of the Picts.

Circa 390, King Cunedda Wledig of North Wales *a descendant of Beli Mawr* and his branch of Romanized Vencones were

transferred from the Manau dependency of the Goutodin (Lothain) kingdom, traditionally by Magnus Maximus. The are moved to the former territory of the warlike Deceangli (Britons) in Western Wales to secure the region from Irish raiders, and it is here that they found the kingdom of Gwynedd.

In 398 the Romans again led a campaign from Britain to defeat Pictish forces in the north, along with Saxon and Irish Scots.

Circa 400, St. Ninian (known as Rignan in Pictland and Trynnian to the Northern British), Apostle to the Southern Picts, was spreading "the Word" amongst the apostate Southern Picts, who had renounced their conversion to Christianity.

**Drust I** (Drustan, Tristan) mac Uuirb (Irb, Erp, Erip, Wirp, Erbin) of the Hundred Battles son of Erp (Irb, Erbin) map Ceretic of Strathclyde (412-452) or (413-453) or (424-453) - he reigned a hundred years and triumphed in a hundred battles.

He was king of the North and South Picts.

He was born around 407, when *the Romans were leaving Britain*.

A true leader, he took control during the ensuing disruption and united all the Southern Picts under his banner, (which probably depicted a wild boar),

and is thought to have set up safe harbours to protect his coastline from invasion by the Britons.

He was a contemporary of King Cœl Hêr (Old King Cole) of the North and High King Vortigern the Thin of Britain - it is assumed that he came to blows with both of them.

He exiled his brother Necton I Morbet son of Irb to Ireland.

He was probably the Pictish king with whom Ceretic of Strathclyde - who ruled from Dumbarton Rock or Alclud - were known for conducting slaving raids in Ireland: Ceretic was a Roman appointed to rule over the barbarians who had succumbed to his subjects' way of life.

In the nineteenth year of Drust's reign St. Patrick arrived in (*peruenit ad*) the island of Ireland, i.e. 435. The Saint denounced Ceretic for the depredations of his people - and turned him into a fox.

Drust occupied a fort known as Trusty's Hill (i.e. Drust's Hill) at Anworth near Gatehouse of Fleet in Galloway in South-west Scotland for a very short time before moving further north to Abernethy in Perthshire.

Pictish symbols comprising a double disc and "Z" rod - a representation of thunder and lightning - a sea serpent, a geometric symbol which looks like a dagger, and what appears to an insect's head, were all carved on an outcrop of rock near the fort's entrance.

This is the first of ten kings called Drust (Drest).

In 449/450, attacks by the Picts and the Irish Scotti prompt High King Vortigern of Britain to hire Jutish (Germanic) and Angeln (Angle) mercenaries to fight them off.

The second major attack on Britain by Drust I is met by the mercenaries under the command of Hengist (and Horsa) on land and at sea and the Pictish tide is repelled.

The mercenaries subsequently turn on their masters and begin a conquest of south-eastern Britain, quickly forming a kingdom of their own in Cantware (Kent) - settling on Ynys Tanatus (the Isle of Thanet in Kent).

**Talorc II** (Taloirc, Thalorg) son of Anile (Aniel) reigned four years (452-456) or (453-457) - reigned 2 or 4 years.

**Nechtan I Morbet** son of Uuirb (Irb, Erp, Erbin) map Ceretic of Strathclyde and a Pictish princess, also known as Morbrec or Mor breac (Speckled Sea), Nechtan Celchamoch and Nectonius

Magnus (the Great) son of King Wirp of the Picts - younger brother of Drust I mac Irb, reigned 24 years (or 10 years) (457-468) - or he reigned from 456 to 480.

Nechtan was named after a Celtic river god.

He was banished to Ireland in his youth by his elder brother (or nephew) Drust II.

In the third year of Nechtan I Morbet's reign **Darlugdach, abbess of Kildaire**, went from Ireland into exile on a Christian mission to the Picts and Britons in Britain for Christ's sake.

In the second year after her arrival Nectan Morbet dedicated **Abernethy** with its territories to God and **St. Brigid, the first abbess of Kildaire**, until the Day of Judgment in the presence of her favorite pupil Darlugdach, who sang Alleluia over that offering - with its boundaries, which extended from the stone in Aperfeirt to the stone near Ceirfull, that is Lethfoss, and thence upwards as far as Athan.

The reason of the offering: When Nechtan was banished to Ireland by Drust II, and betook himself to beg St. Brigid, that she might beseech God for him,

she prayed for him and said, "If thou reach thy own country, the Lord will have mercy upon you. Thou shalt possess in peace the kingdom of the Picts."

The clan-lands of Nechtan Morbert - a Christian - are in the region of Tay, embracing parts of Forfashire, Perthshire and Fife.

**The first openly Christian king of the Picts** and very devout, Nechtan was the first to introduce Christianity to his people, eighty years before St. Columba's mission to the Northern Picts in 565.

Darlugdach became the second abbess of Kildaire when St. Brigid died in 500.

St. Boite raised Nechtan I Morbet from the dead.

**Drust II** (Drest) **Guorthinmoch** son of Irp (Erp, Erbin) (468-498) - or he reigned thirty years from 480 to 510.

It was during his reign that **Fergus I Mór mac Erc** founded his kingdom in Argyll - being the first to rule from Argyll instead of northern Antrim.

Circa 485, the Scotti of Irish Dálriada begin to colonize Argyll at Cantyre. Drust did nothing to stop them, and may not even have known about them, being distracted by pagan rebellions in the north.

**Galam I** (Galanan, Galany) **Arilith** (Erilich) mac Geraint of the Picts (498-513) - or he reigned from 510 to 522 - or he reigned fifteen years.

He is thought to be the same as King Caw (Caius) map Geraint of Strathclyde (fl. 490s), who used his descent from a Pictish princess to rule the Picts.

This period (522) marks the beginning of the division of Pictland into North and South. Drust mac Girom and Drust mac Udrost ruled jointly. Each would keep his seat in the capital of his clan, but in affairs that concerned all the clans they would lead together. It is not clear who rules which division of Pictland.

**Drust III mac Girom** (Gyrom) (513-521) or (522-527 or 531) and (529-533) son of Girom [the Warrior] was joint ruler with Drust IV, deposed in 521, restored in 529.

**Drust IV mac Udrus** (Fudrus) (513-516), (521-529) son of Udrost (Udrossig, Hudrossig) reigned from 522 to 530 (or 532). Joint ruler with Drust III whom he deposed for five years.

He is likely to have battled Britons from Bernicia who were pushed northward by Anglian encroachment on their lands.

Drust III mac Girom (529-533) - see supra - ruled a united Pictland.

**Drusticce** (Dustric) daughter of King Drust (Trust) of the Northern Britons (and perhaps of Strathclyde) was sent to **Abbot Mugint of Whithorn**, in Galloway - successor of Abbot Ninian, first bishop of Whithorn - to learn reading, but she fell in love with one of the younger monks.

St. Finnian of Moville became involved as a go-between but incurred Mugint's wrath and was lucky to emerge alive.

Drusticce was the mother of St. Lonán of Treoit son of St. Talmach - the first bishop of Kildaire.

**Gartnait I** (Gartnach, Garthnac, Garrtnaidh) **mac Girom** (Gyrom, Gurum) (532-539) or (533-540) son of Girom [the Warrior] - or he reigned 24 years - or he reigned from 531 to 537.

**Cailtram** (Gailtram) **mac Girom** (Gyrom, Gurum) (533-541) or (539-540) son of Girom [the Warrior] reigned from 537 to 538 - or the brothers Gartnait and Cailtram ruled jointly from 531 to 537, perhaps one over Caledonii and the other over the Maetae.

Gartnait was succeeded by Óengus, and the later by Alpin II son of Ferath.

**Talorc II** (Colorg) **mac Murtholoic** (Mordeleg, Mordeleth) (540-551) or (541-552) son of Murcholaich reigned eleven years from 538 to 549.

He may be the historical **King Mark** usually associated with Cunomor map Merchiawn of Brittany.

At this time the **Yellow Plague** ravished the country.

Between 549 to 552, following the death of King Maelgwn ("White Stone") Gwyneud of Gwynedd (died circa 547), the **Yellow Plague** that swept the country hit the Britons far harder than it did the Saxon invaders, finally shifting the balance of power in favour of the later.

Even the Picts seemed to be affected by the plague.

**Drust V mac Muniath** (Drust son of Moneth) (551-552) or (552-553) reigned one year - or he reigned from 449 to 550.

He may be the historical **Tristan** whose uncle Mark is usually associated with Cunomor.

A possible Yellow Plague victim.

iv

## Early Historical Kings

### North Pictland

The Northern Picts were combined into one kingdom, that is Cat (Caithness), under the powerful Brude mac Maelchon.

St. Columba needed interpreters to be able to speak to the king, evidence either that the Picts did not speak the Celtic language of the Irish and Scots (or at the very least not the Gael version of the Celtic tongue), or that the two branches had diverged noticeably.

In South Pictland, Scone was the capital of the strongest of the southern sub-kingdoms, Fortriu (Roman Verturiones, modern Forthvoit).

The sub-kingdom of Fib to the east, lives on as Fiofe.

The remaining four were Fotla, Fidach, Circind, and Cé.

*It may ne that South Pictland was only independent of the North for short periods...*

*The South Picts had been converted to Christianity by St. Ninian, the Apostle of the Southern Picts, in the late fourth or early fifth century.*

**Galam II Cennaleph** (Cennalaph, Tagalad) mac Cenaleph (553-557) or (552-580) ("Head-Wound" or "Freckled Head") reigned 4 years - or he reigned from 550 to 555.

He may have ruled jointly with Brude I after his election to the throne - a subordinate king of the Southern Picts - after Brude had become king - but was dethroned after one year of joint rule.

About this time Brude's half-brother Rhun Hir the Great ap

Maelgwyn of Gwynedd marched north to avenge a raid on Anglesey by Elidyr the Handsome map Merchiaun of Rheged - who was killed (about 560) near Caernavon, near his landing - and King Clytno Eitin map Cinbelin of Din-Eitin (Edinburgh) (of Gododdin).

Accompanied by Rhydderch I Hêñ map Tutagual of Strathclyde and Clytno of Gododdin, Cinmarc Oer (the Dismal) map Merchiaun raided Anglesey to avenge his brother's death.

The invaders managed to only burn down Afron (Caernavon) and then withdraw. The strike however managed to anger Rhun who marched north into Rheged and further.

It is thus possible that Galam II either resigned or was deposed - since he seems to have lived another twenty years at the same time - and died in 580.

**Brude I** (Bridei) **mac Maelchon** (553 or 554 or 556-584) son of King Maelgwn Gwynedd of Gwynedd son of King Cadwallon Lawhir ap Einion of Gwynedd and great-grandson of Cunedda (Wledig) ap Edern, progenitor of the royal court at Gwynedd and grandson of Padarn Beisrudd ap Tegid (Paternus of the Scarlet Robe) (son of Tegid, a Roman) became king about 554 or 555... and reigned for thirty years - a most powerful king among the Northern Picts.

The name Maelcon (Mailcon, Maelcon, Melcho - filio Meilochon or Maglocune) or Máelchú is clearly identical with that of the famous King Maelgwn of Gwynedd (in North Wales), who died circa 548.

Unlike most of his predecessors, the mother of Brude I was a Pictish princess. His father was the Roman King Maelgwyn Hir ap Cadwallen of Gwynedd - a vicious godless tyrant who murdered his own nephew to marry his wife.

Brude I was elected to the throne after a succession of weak kings victimized by Britons, the English and the Scots of Dálriada (Argyll), especially under Gabrán mac Domangairt:

*Gabran sought to take advantage of the divisions among the Picts and established relations with Brychan of Gododdin son of Brychan of Brycheinoig, marrying his daughter Luan.*

The election of Brude I was a conscious effort by the Pict nobility to bring strength to the throne - as Maelgwyn and his son Rhun were the strongest British kings of their time.

The early part of his reign was occupied with restoring the kingdom which had been disintegrating from internal stresses.

He united the Northern and Southern Picts and repelled an invasion of the Scots of Dálriada in 560.

With the death of Gabrán mac Domangairt a migration of the Scots took flight before Brude I.

He was able to recover territory lost to the aggressive Gabrán and reduced the Scots to vassalage - as Brude's ascent was necessary for the grant of Iona to St. Columba in 563.

In 563, St. Columba, a descendant of the High Kings of Ireland, arrived in the kingdom with twelve companions. He was granted land on Iona where he founded a monastery in order to introduce to the Picts along the western coast to Christianity. Visiting the king, he won his respect and plays a major role not just in winning converts for the church but also as a diplomat.

The chief palace of Brude's kingdom, which may have corresponded with later Fortriu (or Moray), is not known. St. Columba came to the River Ness, and his court was atop a steep rock: It is generally supposed that Brude's chief residence was a hill-fort at Craig Phadrig, a forested hill on the western edge of Inverness, overlooking the Beauly Firth.

In the eighth year of his reign, in 565, Brude I was converted (to the faith) by St. Columba who baptized him and many of his people in Loch Ness.

St. Columba bested Brude's chief druid Broichan in a contest of Christian verses pagan magic, and drove off a monster that was lurking in the River Ness which had killed one of the local inhabitants.

Ultimately King Brude I of the Picts forced Gabran to abandon his gains - and Gabrán may have fallen in battle.

Over the years his power and reputation grew to the point that even the people of the Orkneys and the Hebrides acknowledged him as their ruler.

In 573 Brude I handed the invading Dálriadan Scotti a heavy defeat at *Battle of Lora* (or *Delgu/Telocho*), and laid waste to their territories in the west.

Brude I made two expeditions to the Orkneys during his reign [ ] in 580 and 581.

The under-king of the Orkneys was at his court.

The Southern Picts however remained hostile and, after a thirty year rule, Brude I died in the *Battle of Streith* against Pictish rivals at Circinn, an area thought to correspond with Mearns (Kincardineshire), on the coast of north-east Scotland, in 584 around the age of sixty.

**Gartnait II** mac Domnach (584-602) *son of Domelch* was elected by the Picts who were consciously repeating the process that brought Brude I to the throne of Inverness, i.e. the election of the son of a strong king - and he reigned from 584 to 595.

Throughout his reign, he was battling constantly with King Áedán mac Gabrán of the Dálriadan Scots *son of Gabrán mac Domangairt the Traitor of Dálriada and Princess Domelch/Domnach of the Picts* who, with his four (or five) sons, never ceased attacking Gartnait's kingdom.

But Gartnait II lost control over the Maetae who went to war against his father... he fell under Áedán's sword and died circa 599 and was succeeded by Nechtan II nepos Uerb.

Circa 600, in the territory of Cé (Kay), which had probably been part of the territory of the Taexii, there was fortification at use.

**Nechtan II** mac Cannon (Canu) moco Erp or Nechtan II nepos Uerb (599 or 602-621) *grandson (or nephew) of Uerb (Verb) son of Irb* reigned 20 years - the first openly Christian king of the Picts and very devout - or he ruled from 595 to around 616.

His reign is placed in the time of Pope Boniface IV.

It has been suggested that Nechtan II is the same person as Neithon of Alt Clut *son of Guipno map Dumnaugual Hêñ (Dyfnwal Hêñ) of Alt Clut [son of Cinuit of Alt Clut son of Ceretic Guletic (Coroticus) of Alt Clut]*. Alt Clut was a Brittonic kingdom, later known as Strathclyde.

In 603, King Áedán mac Gabrán of the Dálriadan Scots invaded the kingdom of Bernicia and attacked King Æthelfrith of Bernicia *son of King Athelric of Bernicia* - the founder of Northumbria - at the *Battle of Deksastan*.

By fighting and defeating Dálriada, Æthelfrith secured the alliance of Dálriada's enemies, the Southern Picts.

Thus, despite the animosity between Angles and Picts, in 616 Nechtan showed Christian charity by offering shelter to the pagan Eanfrith of Northumbria, after his father King Æthelfrith of Bernicia died in battle, who had fled to the Picts to find refuge among his mother's relatives.

Nechtan's powerbase was in the Tay and Forfar regions to the east. Nechtan was the founder of Abernethy.

Nechtan mac Canu (Cannon) died in 621 - but the death of Nechtan II also recorded as 614.

**Cinioch I** (Ciniath, Kenneth) **mac Luthrenn** (*Cináed mac Luchtrenn son of Lutrin* (621-631) reigned (for 14 or) 19 years - or he reigned from 616 to 631.

His power and prestige can be inferred by the reaction or lack of action on the part of Edwin of Northumbria at a time when a rival, Eanfrith *son of King Æthelfrith of Bernicia*, was being sheltered by the Picts.

When Edwin campaigned in northern Britain he made no attempts on the Pictish kingdom.

Cinioch's death is recorded as 631; but the overthrowing of King Edwin of Northumbria is dated 633.

**Gartnait III mac Gwid** (Wid, Foith, Fochel) (631-635) *son of Foith son of Gwid (Uuid, Fotle)* - a valiant fighter who fought alongside Owain map Urien of Rheged in the *Battle of Catraeth* in 595 (died 653) - and the grandson of Brude I reigned between 5 and 8 years - from 631 to 635.

He defended his borders from the incursions of the Strathclyde Britons, the Dálriada Scots and the Angles of Northumbria.

The death of Gartnain mac Foith was in 635 (or 637).

**Brude II (Breidei) mac Gwid** (635-641) *son of Foith son of Gwid (Uuid, Fotle)* (died 653) *son of Brude I* reigned 5 years.

He was more heavily involved in the battlefield than his brother, Gartnait III.

He defeated King Domall Brecc (*Donuel*) mac Eochaid of Dálriada *son of King Eochaid Buide of Dálriada son of King Áedan mac Gabráin of Dálriada son of King Gabráin mac Domangairt the Traitor of Dálriada (eponymous ancestor of the Cenél nGabráin)* in 638 in the *Battle of Glenn Mureson*, which gave the Picts control over the Scots for the next generation.

Brude was not as successful against Owen I map Bili of Strathclyde.

Moreover the Angles of Northumbria under Oswald *son of King Æthelfrith of Bernicia son of King Athelric of Bernicia* were becoming a real threat - by 633/4 he had established his power in Lothian, on Brude's southern border.

Around 638 Oswald clashed with Owen defeating him around Stirling and Edinburgh.

The death of Bruide filius Foith was 641.

**Cailtriam (Caitarni, Kelturan)** reigned 1 year or 6 years.

**Talorc III mac Gwid** (641-653) *of Foith son of Gwid (Uuid, Fotle)* (died 653) *son of Brude I* [or son of Murtholoic (Muircholaich,

*Mordeleg*)] reigned 11 (or 12) years - or he reigned from 641 to 653.

Dálriada's aggression was checked with the defeat and death of Domnall Brecc mac Eochaid in the *Battle of Strathcarron* near Falkirk in 642, Strathclyde's with that of Owen I.  
*Domnall Brecc's death ushered a state of near anarchy in Dálriada and its domination over the next 60 years by the Britons of Strathclyde.*

The Angles were systematically encroaching on Talorc's southern border - prior to his death in 642 Oswald son of King Æthelfrith of Bernicia son of King Athelric of Bernicia had laid siege to Edinburgh.

Oswald's successor, his brother, King Oswiu (Oswy) of Northumbria son of King Æthelfrith of Bernicia son of King Athelric of Bernicia, was even more aggressive and forced Talorc into paying tribute.

*Talorc IV son of Uuid - and brother of Gartnait IV and Brude II reigned 12 years. The death of Tolarg mac Fooith was in 653.*

**Taloren I** (Talargan, Talorgan) **mac Eanfrith** (Anfrud) of the Angles (653-657) son of former King Eanfrith (Aenfrith) of Bernicia and a Pictish mother - and nephew of King Oswiu (Oswy) of Northumbria who "for the most part subdued and made tributary" the Picts (along with the Dál Riata) was the first king of the Picts with English blood.

He became king in 653 and reigned four years - *and it is possible that Taloren was subject to Oswiu.*

King Eanfrith (Aenfrith) of Bernicia (who reigned 633-4) son of King Æthelfrith of Northumbria son of King Æthelric of Bernicia son of Anglican King Ida of Bernicia fled into exile after his father, King Æthelfrith of Northumbria, was killed around the year 616.

Taloren I defeated and killed King Dunchad mac Conaing of Dálriada and led the Picts to victory against the Scots in 654 in the *Battle of Strath Ethairt*, leaving him in control of the north, albeit as a Northumbrian vassal. This battle may have been part of a traditional "inaugural raid" against hostile neighbours to mark the beginning of a king's rule.

Taloren died in 657. No sooner had he died than the English King Oswiu (Oswy) of Northumbria (Taloren's uncle) "subdued and made tributary" most of Southern Pictland. This subjugation was to last for almost thirty years.

**Gartnait IV mac Donall** (Domnall, Donuel, Dúngail) (657-663) son of King Domnall Brecc (Donuel) of Dálriada, (who was killed in battle with the Britons of Strathclyde in 642), and a daughter of Gwid son of Brude I reigned 6 or 6 1/2 years.

Like his predecessor he was a client of King Oswiu (Oswy) of Northumbria.

This king built (the church of) Abernethy - 225 years and 11 months before the foundation of Dunkeld.

King Domath of the Picts - possibly a provincial king - was warned to summon St. Brigit from Ireland. She founded the church at Abernethy, and baptized the king.

Relations with the Scots of Dálriada, despite the apparent family ties between the Picts and the Scot royal houses, continued to deteriorate.

Gartnait died in 663.

*Pestilence struck the British Isles south of the lands of the Picts and Scots.*

**Drust VI** (Drest) (663-672) **mac Donnel** son of King Domnall Brecc (Donuel) of Dálriada... and a daughter of Gwid son of Brude I reigned 6 or 7 years.

He was another client king installed by King Oswiu (Oswy) of Northumbria. He was crowned in 664 - the same year as the infamous Synod of Whitby - a great debate about the correct dating of Easter, and the (ultimately successful) attempt by the Roman Catholic Church to assert its ascendancy over the Celtic Church.

He was a weak king, unable to react to the conquest of the Hebrides by Domangairt II mac Domnall of Dálriada.

Upon Oswiu's death in 670, King Ecgfrith of Northumbria son of King Oswiu (Oswy) of Northumbria - and brother of Alhfrith, sub-king of Deira - son of King Æthelfrith of Bernicia son of King Athelric of Bernicia immediately sought to bring the Picts more directly under his control.

In 668, areas of the south were conquered by the Northumbrian Angles under King Oswiu of Northumbria.

King Ecgfrith of Northumbria, the new king, invaded the Pictish kingdom to re-impose his tribute and decimated the Pictish army.

"Determined to free themselves forever from subjection to the Saxons," Drust led a failed Pictish Revolt against Ecgfrith.

The massacre in 671, at the *Battle of Two Rivers*, was such that bodies blocked two rivers and the English were able to cross over dry-shod to pursue the fugitives.

In 672, Drust tried to expel the Northumbrian invaders from Pictland, but Ecgfrith put down the opportunistic rebellion of the Picts, which resulted in the Northumbrians taking control of the land between the Firth of Forth and the Tweed for the next fourteen years, and the Picts were "reduced to slavery and remained under the yoke of captivity."

The Verturian King Drust VI mac Donuel survived but was deposed and expulsed from the kingdom in 672 - and he died around 677.

v

## Later Historical Kings

**Brude III** (Bredei) **mac Bili** of the Britons (672-693) son of King Bili I map Nechtan of Alt Clut son of Neithon II of Alt Clut - and his mother was probably a daughter of King Edwin of Northumbria son of King Ælla, founder of Deira, and a sister of Taloren I son of King Eanfrith (Aenfrith) of Bernicia and a Pictish mother reigned 21 years.

In his time St. Adomnán, abbot of Iona, son of Rónán mac Tinne and Ronat - a woman from the northern Uí Néill lineage known as Cenél n'Énda flourished.

Brude III may have been born as early as 616, but no later than the year 628.

Brude's reign was a high point in Pictish history - upon ascending to the throne, he immediately set out to bring the troublesome sub-kings of Pictland under control.

Although his *fratrellis*, i.e maternal first cousin, King Ecgfrith of Northumbria, (who was first cousin of Talargan and Brude's mother), had annihilated the Picts in 672, his trouble with the Mercians had kept him busy and Brude was able to rebuild his power base.

To lull Ecgfrith into a false sense of security, Brude allowed the Anglican church to establish itself in his kingdom.

As Brude himself was highly religious, he was *probably* pleased to see his friend, St. Adomnán, abbot of Iona, preach to the Picts.

Brude III was one of the more expansionary and active Fortean monarchs; advancing northwards with a force of trusted veterans he tackled one rebellious stronghold after another.

In 681, Northumbria established a bishopric under Bishop Trumwine amongst the Southern Picts at Abercorn. The effort to convert the Picts failed just four years later and was abandoned shortly after the North Picts defeated the Northumbrians at the *Battle of Dunnichen Hill*.

In 681, Brude III attacked and overthrew the mighty fortress of Dún Foither (Dunnottar), on the eastern seaboard, and, by 682, he had equipped a navy of such strength that he was able to sail north and lay waste to the insubordinate Orcadian sub-kingdom, a campaign so violent that the Orkney Isles were destroyed.

By 683 powerful enough to worry the English King Ecgfrith.

In 683 war broke out between the Scots of Dálriada under King Máel Dúin mac Conaill of Dálriada son of Conall Crandomna son of King Eochaid Buidhe of Dálriada son of King Aedán mac Gabráin of Dálriada son of King Gabráin mac Domangairt the Traitor of Dálriada and Brude's Picts.

The Scots attacked Brude's main powerbase in the south, Dundurn in Strathearn - but did not take the great hill-fort.

Brude responded with an attack on the hill-fort of Dunadd, the capital of Dálriada.

Ecgfrith had marched into Pictland with a thundering army of cavalry and infantry in order to further subjugate the Picts and force the Roman Church upon them as the state religion. The Picts preferred the Celtic Church.

Although Ecgfrith considered him a sub-king, Brude III was establishing his overlordship and securing his northern, eastern and western boundaries - and looking to the south.

Seeking to recover territory once ruled by his grandfather in Fife and Circinn, since taken by the English, Brude, a brilliant tactician, met Ecgfrith and a huge Northumbrian host about 3 p.m. on Saturday, 20 May 685, at the *Battle of Dun Nechtain* (*Cath Duin Neachtain*) (*Nechtansmere*) (*Dunnichen Hill, now Dunnichen Moss*) near Forfar in Angus - also known as *Gueith Lin Garan* (the *Battle of Heron Pool*) by the Britons.

Brude probably had descendants of the Creones (Britons) tribe amongst his forces.

Using his knowledge of the local terrain, Brude lured the English into a mire where their whole army, along with its king and personal bodyguard, were routed and utterly destroyed in a furious orgy of bloody revenge and unleashed nationalistic rage.

Within moments Ecgfrith was dead and the Northumbrians were annihilated and the remnants of the Anglo-Saxon army were put to flight. Only a few survivors managed to struggle back to England... and it is likely that without the Pictish victory at Dunnichen Hill, the Nation of Scotland would never have come about.

Brude then proceeded to clear Pictland of the remaining Northumbrians who had settled there, killing or enslaving them.

Magnanimous in victory, Ecgfrith was given a royal burial by the Picts on "St. Columba's Isle" - which was either on Iona, on the west coast of Scotland, a journey of several days duration, or, much more likely... in the Firth of Forth, just a day or so away from Dunnichen Hill.

The Northumbrians were expelled from southern Pictland and Fortean domination of the southern Pictish zone was established: Pictland ran from the River Forth northwards, including Orkney, Shetland, and the Western Isles: Prior to the Viking Age, the main power of Pictland appears to have been the kingdom of Fortriu. From the Forth south to the River Humber lay the powerful kingdom of Northumbria. To the south-west of Pictland were the Gaels of Dálriada.

Brude pursued the Anglo-Saxon army back across the Forth, recovered parts of Lothian and expelled Bishop Trumwine of the Picts and his monks at Abercorn from Abercorn - and the diocese ceased to exist, stalling Roman Catholic expansion in Scotland - marking the point in which Pictish independence from Northumbria was permanently secured.

Brude III ruled unchallenged for the rest of his days.

At his death in 693, sorely lamented by his kinsmen, Brude III was taken to the sacred Isle of Iona, where St. Adomnán prayed over his body all night, trying to restore him to life;

in the morning he was beginning to show signs of life - his body moved and his eyes began to open - but St. Adomnán was persuaded to cease by the remonstrance of a pious holy man lest such a miracle set a dangerous precedent:

We might assume that Brude III had fallen into a coma and was left to die when he recovered.

**Taran II** (Taran, Tarachin)<sup>219</sup> **mac EntiFidaich** (693-697) son of EntiFidaich, who was killed in 693, and Princess Der-Ilei of the Picts daughter of (or less probably sister of) King Brude III mac Beli of the Picts - possibly a uterine half-brother of Brude IV and Nechtan III mac Der-Ilei - he succeeded Brude III in 693.

After EntiFidaich and Nia Néill and the sons of Boendo were killed, Taran II, who was a weak king, unpopular and judged unfit to be king, was expelled from the throne by his successor in 696 and in 697 fled to Ireland where he found sanctuary.

The real power at this time was in the hands of Brude mac Der-Ilei, who became sovereign.

By 697, the North's long-held pre-eminence over the South forged a single kingdom in Pictland.

There were five languages spoken in Britain: Latin, the common language of the church; Old English, the language of the Angles and Saxons; Irish, spoken on the western coast of Britain and in Ireland; Brythonic, ancestor of the Welsh language, spoken in large parts of western Britain; and Pictish, spoken in northern Britain.

By the ninth century a sixth language, Old Norse, had arrived with the Vikings.

vi

## A United Pictland

**Brude IV** (Bredei) **mac Der-Ilei** (Dereli, Derelei) (697-706) son of Prince Dargart (Dergard) mac Finguine of the Cenél Comgaill of Dálriada (killed with his son Feroth in the Battle of Monith Carno in 729) and Princess Der-Ilei of the Picts daughter of King Brude III mac Beli of the Picts - somewhat restoring Pictish prestige which had suffered under his predecessor.

(Prince Dargart (Dergard) mac Finguine of the Cenél Comgaill was a great-grandson of King Comgall mac Domangairt of Dálriada son of King Domangairt Réti of Dálriada son of legendary King Fergus Mór mac Erc of Dálriada son of Erc of Dálriada.)

Brude IV had a number of brothers and half-brothers, including:

Nechtan III mac Der-Ilei, King Talorgan of Atholl son of Drostan (Drest, Durst) (executed by drowning in 739), Congtus son of Dargart (died 712), Talorgen son of Congtus (defeated in 731 and likewise drowned in 734), Cináed (Ciniod) son of Der-Ilei (killed in 713) and, perhaps, Comgall mac Dargarto.

In 697 Brude IV attended the Synod of Birr in County Offaly, Ireland, where many important men of Ireland and Scotland guaranteed St. Adomnán, abbot of Iona, who proposed his Cáin Adomnáin (*Lex Innocentium, Law of the Innocents*), protecting the elderly, children, women and clergy from the ravages of war.

In 698 the English attempted another invasion - and were again soundly beaten.

Brude invaded Lothian and in a battle between the Picts and the Scots defeated and killed English sub-king Beorhtred son of sub-king Beornhæth, an Anglo-Saxon nobleman, who was showing signs of independence.

In the winter of 700 it was so cold that the sea froze between Ireland and Scotland.

<sup>219</sup> His name was the same as the Celtic thunder god **Taranis**, worshipped essentially in Gaul, Gallaecia, Britain and Ireland, but also in the Rhineland and Danube regions, to whom human sacrificial offerings were made.

In 701, conflict in Skye, where *Conaing son of Dúinchad* [ ] was killed *most probably* in an internal conflict among the tribes of Dálriada.  
*Dálriada was defeated at Loch Lomond or by the Levan in 704 by the Britons of Alt Clut.*  
Brude IV mac Der-Ilei died in 706 - and he was succeeded by his brother Nechtan III mac Der-Ilei.

**Nechtan III mac Der-Ilei** (Nechtan mac Dargarto) (706-724, restored 728-729) *son of Enti Fidaich* succeeded his brother King Brude IV mac Der-Ilei of the Picts in 706 - and he reigned 18 years.

He is associated with significant religious reforms which brought about bloody chaos in Pictland.

Nechtan preferred the Roman religion to that of the Celtic Church. He believed that the Roman Church had the rights to dating of Easter and, in 710, wrote St. Coelfrid, abbot of Monkwearmouth-Jarrow Abbey, asking for details that he could introduce their system to his people.

Following St. Coelfrid's reply, he sent out a decree to all the churches in Pictland demanding that they accept the Roman method for calculating Easter. *This is the system we use today.*

He also instructed the clergy to have their hair tonsured in the Roman style and had a new church built using English architects to ensure that it was built to Roman convention and conformity.

Two sons of Nechtan *are thought to have* died in 710, and it is not known whether or not he had any surviving sons or daughters.

The first five years of his reign were consumed by the struggle with Northumbria over Lothian.

*Finnguine son of Delle Roith of the Picts - a kinsman of the Pictish king* - was killed in 711 by the Northumbrians in the *Battle of Mag Mannon*, presumably in the area around Stirling where the Plain of Manau had once been, possibly near Grangemouth.

The issue was decided when, in 711, Nechtan tried to befriend the Northumbrian Angles; they sent Beorhfrith (Bertfrid) of Dunbar *son of Beorthred son of Beornhæth*, King Osred's chief ealdorman, and the *Battle of the Moor of Mannand/Manaw* was fought, with heavy losses on both sides.

In the aftermath, Nechtan negotiated a treaty with King Osred I of Northumbria *son of Aldfrith son of Alfrith son of King Oswiu (Oswy) of Northumbria son of King Æthelfrith of Bernicia son of King Athelric of Bernicia* abandoning Lothian to the Angles.

This treaty would guide relations between the two nations for several decades.

The Celtic Church changed over to the Roman system for dating Easter in 716.

In 717, Nechtan - "a philosopher king" - convinced by St. Ceolfrid [ ] expelled the clergy from Iona "across Druim Alban - the spine of Britain" - so that they fled into Dálriada.

St. Coelfrid sent masons and craftsmen to aid in building stone churches and Nechtan dedicated his kingdom to St. Peter...

But it, in relation to Nechtan's intense religiosity, may also have weakened his authority because from 718 he - a treacherous Anglophile who would have to be removed - was faced with internal dissent.

He was, however, a strong king and maintained a firm grip on his subjects *until 724, when he was forced to give up his crown and retire to the church.*

Nechtan had fervently supported the efforts of St. Curetán, one of the bishops established by St. Adomnán to spread Christianity and desired to establish a Pictish church independent of the Anglicans.

He had appealed to St. Ceolfrith for advice on ecclesiastical questions, and consequently adopted the Roman Easter and other usages.

In fact Nechtan, a proponent of the Roman version of Christianity, had been baptized by Curtetan and built a Catholic church at Restenneth in Angus.

Another Roman rite adherent, *Bishop Egbert*, had succeeded in 716 in persuading the monks of Iona to celebrate Easter according to

the Roman calendar. Those who resisted were expelled - marking the coming of age of an independent Pictish Church. Thus Nechtan's reign marks *the beginnings of the Picts as a Christian people*. Nevertheless adherents of the Celtic rite remained and *may have* fueled Nechtan's opposition.

The discontent that had been simmering below the surface now erupted into five years of some of the most bitter and bloody internecine religious-political civil warfare that this country has ever seen.

In 723 King Selbach mac Fercher of the Cenél Loairn and of Dálriada *son of King Ferchar Fota (the Tall) of the Cenél Loairn of Dálriada son of Feredach mac Fergusa - and a descendant of legendary King Loarn mac Eirc of Dálriada* abdicated and retired to a monastery, *probably* succeeded by his son King Dúngal mac Selbaig the Impetuous.

The *clericatus* of King Nechtan III mac Der-Ilei of the Picts was in 724; i.e. his prestige was so low he abdicated in favour of his nephew Drust VII mac Eochaid *son of Nechtan's half-brother* and retired into a religious life and became a monk in a monastery, *probably* under coercion.

The succession became muddled by in-fighting and rapid successions (thanks to the practice of matrilineal descent followed by the Picts, and a large number of eligible would-be kings).

King Dúngal mac Selbaig the Impetuous was deposed as over-king of Dálriada in 726 by King Eochaid mac Echdach of the Cenél nGábráin of Dálriada *son of King Eochaid mac Domangairt of Dálriada son of King Domangart mac Domnaill of Dálriada son of King Domall Brecc (Donuel) mac Eochaid of Dálriada...*

Angus mac Brude (724) *possibly a son of Brude IV (Bredei) mac Der-Ilei son of Derelei (Dergard)* was quickly eliminated by Drust VII mac Eochaid.



Two Pict horsemen chase an isolated Scot into a deserted broch.  
 Dalriada - northwest Scotland, 7<sup>th</sup> century.

**Drust VII mac Talorgen** (724-726) *also known as Carnach mac Ferach and Drust mac Eochaid* [ ] overthrew Nechtan III and ruled together with King **Alpin I** (Elpin) mac Eochaid of Dálriada (726-728) *son of Prince Eochu of Dálriada* - a five year joint rule throwing the Pictish kingdom into a five year period of civil war.

*Simul son of Drest, perhaps yet another sibling of Nechtan, was imprisoned by Drest VII in 725. In the same year Bishop Brec of Fortriu died - who had been appointed by Nechtan as the earliest known bishop in Pictland.*

Dúngal mac Selbach became involved in the dynastic conflicts of the Picts in support of Drust VII (who was deposed and cast from the kingdom of the Picts in 726).

In 726, Nechtan III left the monastic life and sought to reclaim the throne and was warring with Drest VII and Alpin I for nine anarchic months; but he was defeated and flung into prison by Drust VII and, removing the former king from one monastery where he had friends and influence to another where Drest's partisans were in control. The same year, Drust VII himself was ousted as king of the Picts by Alpin I, a position he held until 728 despite opposition from Drust VII and Óengus I mac Fergusson son of Fergus who defeated him at the *Battle of Monid Croib* (*Monacrib*).

Nechtan III managed to escape prison in 728 and raise an army with which he crushed Alpin I completely in the *Battle of Castle Credi* - and his territories and all his men were taken in a wretched battle.

He fought a four-sided war for the Pictish throne - Alpin I was defeated by Óengus I in the *Battle of Montcrieffe Hill, near Perth*, and fled back to Dálriada.

Four kings competed for power in Pictland: Drust VII, Nechtan III, Alpin I and Óengus I, who was a partisan for Nechtan. Carnach son of Ferach, a sub-king from the far north, was also involved in the fighting - he is said to have ruled for 24 years. Battles were fought on sea as well as on land, and were often massive in scale.

Four battles were fought in 728 and 729: In 728, the shadowy King Alpin I of the Picts of Dálriada (726-728) was defeated by Óengus I in the *Battle of Monaidd Craeb* [ ] where Alpin's son was killed,

Nechtan III crushed Alpin I completely in the *Battle of Castle Credi* - and his territories and all his men were taken in a wretched battle. This second defeat led to Alpin's flight and Nechtan being restored to the kingship.

Nechtan in turn was challenged by Óengus I and suffered a humiliating defeat at the *Battle of Cairn o' Mount Pass* in 729. Defeated in the civil war by Óengus I, Nechtan III was forcibly retired to his monastery (where he died in 732).

*Nechtan had moved the capital from Inverness to Scone near the Tay River near Perth.*

On 12 August 729 Óengus I defeated and killed Drust VII in the *Battle of Druim Derg Blathuug*, but it is unknown what happened to Alpin.

In 729, three times fifty ships of the Picts were destroyed on the Ross of Cuissine - a total complement of between three thousand and four thousand men.

**Óengus I** (Angus, Unuist) (Uurguist, Wrguist) **mac Fergusson** (728 or 729-761), king of Dálriada and of Pictland, son of Fergus was a member of the Eóganachta of Munster as a descendant of *Coirpre Cruthnechán* or "Cairbre the Little Pict" - a mythological emanation or double of Coirpre Luachra mac Cuirc legendary son of Corc mac Luigthig (Conall Corc) ancestor of Éogan Mór son of Aillil Ollamh and Sadb ingen Chuinn daughter of Conn of the Hundred Battles - and ancestor of the Eóganacht Locha Léin, rulers of the kingdom of Iarmuman.

The branch of the kindred from which he came were known as Egohanacha Magh Geirginn, said to be located in an area known as Circinn, usually associated with modern Angus and the Mearns.

His close kin included at least two sons: *Bridei* (died 736) and King Talorcen II of the Picts (died 782); and two brothers: *Talorgan* (died 750) and Brude V of the Southern Picts (died 763).

Óengus I was ruthless and hard, "a tyrannical murderer who, from the beginning to the end of his reign, persisted in the performance of bloody crimes."

He emerged the victor of the civil war by killing Drust VII in the *Battle of Droma Derg Blathug* in 729.

He took control amid the general chaos and disorder [ ] drowning his enemies in a large tank filled with water.

In the *Battle of Monith Carno* (in 729) Óengus I defeated the enemies of Nechtan III, among whom are named: *Biceot son of Moneit, Finguine son of Drostan and Fereoth son of Finguine*.

Óengus' reign was dominated by wars with the Scots of Dálriada, who were subjugated, and the Britons of Alt Clut, later the kingdom of Strathclyde.

In the 730s Óengus I fought against Dálriada whose traditional overlords and protectors in Ireland, the Cenél Conaill, were much weakened at this time.

King Dúngal mac Selbaig of the Cenél Loairn and of Dálriada and King Eochaid mac Echdach of the Cenél nGabráin of Dálriada were still in conflict as late as 731, when Dúngal burnt Tairpert Boitir (Tarbert) in the lands of the Cenél nGabráin, anciently part of the Gaelic over-kingdom of Dálriada.

A fleet from Dálriada fought for High King Flaithbertach mac Loingsig of Ireland.<sup>220</sup> Chief of the Cenél Conaill - a branch of the northern Uí Néill, in his war with High King Áed Allán of Ireland,<sup>221</sup> member of the Cenél nEógain sept of the northern Uí Néill, and suffered heavy losses in 733.

The most powerful ruler in Scotland for over two decades, Óengus I was involved in wars in Ireland and England.

*Kings from Óengus' family dominated Pictland until 839 when a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Vikings began a new period of instability, which ended with the coming to power of Kenneth (Cináed) mac Alpin.*

For most of Óengus' reign Northumbria was ruled by the capable King Eadbeht Eating of Northumbria son of Eata son of Glin Mawr a descendant of Ida of Bernicia through a son of Ida named Ocg.

(Eadbeht Eating was a brother of Archbishop Ecgbert of York.)

Fighting between the Picts, led by *Bridei son of Óengus*, and the Dálriada, led by *Talorgan mac Congussa*, is recorded in 731.

From 731 Óengus I was at war with Dúngal mac Selbach of Strathclyde who had been deposed by Eochaid III [ ] and had retired in Loarn.

It may be that Óengus I was involved in wars in Ireland, perhaps fighting with Aed Allán, or against him as an ally of King Cathal mac Finguine of Munster or Cashel of the Eóganacht Glendamnach sept..

*Bridei son of Óengus I* was at Tory Island, on the north-west coast of Donegal, close to the lands of Áed Allán's enemy Flaithbertach mac Loingsig - and the Pictish fleet from Fortriu was fighting for Flaithbertach rather than against him.

In 733, Dúngal mac Selbach "profaned the sanctuary of Tory Island when he dragged *Bridei son of Óengus I* out of it."

<sup>220</sup> High King Flaithbertach mac Loingsig of Ireland, Chief of the Cenél Conaill - a branch of the northern Uí Néill, son of High King Loingseach mac Óengusso of Ireland son of Óengus son of High King Domnall mac Áedo of Ireland son of High King Áed mac Ainmuirech of the Uí Néill - a distant cousin of St. Columba of Iona - and ancestor of High King Niall of the nine Hostages of Ireland.

<sup>221</sup> High King Áed Allán of Ireland, member of the Cenél nEógain sept of the northern Uí Néill, son of High King Fergal mac Máele Dún of Ireland son of King Máel Dún mac Máele Fithrich of Ailech son of High King Áed Uaridnach of Ireland son of High King Domnall Ilchelgach of Ireland son of High King Muirchertach mac Muiredaig (Mac Ecrae) of Ireland son of Éogan mac Néill son of High King Niall of the nine Hostages of Ireland.

In 734 Óengus I invaded Loarn, captured the fortress of Donally and overthrew Dúngal mac Selbach as king of the Cenél Loairn, who fled to Ireland, and was replaced by his first cousin King Muiredach mac Aincellaig of Dálriada *son of King Aincellach mac Ferchair the Good of Dálriada son of King Fercher Fota (the Tall) of Dálriada son of Feredach mac Fergus - a descendant of legendary King Loarn mac Eirc son of Erc son of Eochaid Muinremuir - eponymous ancestor of the Cenél Loairn.*

In 734 *Talorgan mac Congussa* was handed over to the Picts by his brother and drowned by Óengus I.

Dúngal was wounded, the *unidentified* fortress of Dún Leithfinn was destroyed, and he "fled into Ireland, to be out of the power of Óengus I."

Then Óengus I turned his attention *again* to Dálriada and defeated Alpin I in a second campaign in 736 - whereupon Alpin's rival Muiredach mac Aincellach of the Cenél Loairn fled to Ireland *where he died in 731.*

Dúngal, who had returned from Ireland, and his brother Feradach, were captured and bound in chains.

Óengus laid the country waste and the fortresses of Creic and Dunadd, capital of the Scots, were taken *as he conquered the whole of Scotland north of the Forth and Clyde.*

*Engus son of Brude or Brude son of Óengus was killed in the siege of Dunadd.*

Óengus' brother, *Talorgan mac Fergus* may have been a king of the Picts - and perhaps a king of Atholl between about 736 to 750.

He was killed in battle against the Britons of Alt Clut.

Muiredach of the Cenél Loairn was defeated with heavy losses by *Talorgan mac Fergus*, perhaps by Loch Awe.

Cinioch II mac Wredech (Uuredach, Feredach) *son of Uurecech (Feradach) son of King Selbach mac Ferchair son of King Fercher Fota (the Tall) of Dálriada son of Feredach mac Fergus - a descendant of legendary King Loarn mac Eirc son of Erc son of Eochaid Muinremuir - eponymous ancestor of the Cenél Loairn* was captured and put in chains by Óengus I in 736 - in 763 he succeeded Óengus' brother Brude V mac Fergus as king of the Picts.

Prince Talorgan of Atholl *son of Drostan* was captured near Dún Ollagh - and was drowned on Óengus' order in 739.

Muiredach's son Eogan mac Muiredach succeeded him but was subordinate to Óengus I and after his death in 739, Angus was the sole, and *first king of the Picts and Scots* of Dálriada.

The Scots however must have continued to resist him because Óengus I went on punitive expeditions in 739 and 741.

In 740, *Earnwine son of King Eadwulf I of Northumbria* was killed on the orders of King Eadberht of Northumbria *son of Eata - and brother of Archbishop Ecgbert of York.*

There was a war between the Picts and Northumbrians, during which King Æthelbald of Mercia *son of Alweo son of Eowa of Mercia - brother of King Penda of Mercia son of King Pybba of Mercia son of Creoda of Mercia, first king of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia* took advantage of the absence of Eadberht to ravage his lands, and perhaps burn York.

*Earnwine's* father had been an exile in the north after his defeat in the civil war of 705-706, and it may be that Óengus I or Æthelbald, or both, had tried to place him on the Northumbrian throne.

In a final campaign in 741, Óengus I again smote the Dálriada Scotti in their Caledonian territories, ruling over them, and also in Ireland - and Dálriada disappeared from records for a generation.

In 744 Eogan mac Muiredach moved against the Britons of Alt Clut, or Strathclyde, but he found his match in Teudebur map Bili of Strathclyde who in 750 defeated *Talorgan of the Picts*, the brother of Óengus I, in the *Battle of Mygedawg, possibly Mugdock*, east of Dumbarton. His victory was so complete the Picts' power was utterly destroyed.

This must have weakened his control over Dálriada sufficiently for King Áed Find Airechtech mac Eochaid of Dálriada *son of King Eochaid mac Echdach of Dálriada - a descendant of King Domnall Brecc (Donuel) of Dálriada...* to claim the throne of Dálriada and declare his independence.

*In 747 the abbot of Clinnrigmonaig died; i.e. in the reign of Óengus I.*

[From 740 to 750,] Óengus I and Æthelbald were allied against Eadberht and exercised joint rulership over Britain, or *bretwaldaship* - Óengus I collecting tribute north of the River Humber and Æthelbald south of the Humber.

Again, in 750, there were battles between the Picts and the Britons of Alt Clut, or Strathclyde, after Kyle, Ayrshire, was taken from Alt Clut by King Eadberht of Northumbria.

In 750, Óengus I took on the Britons in the *Battle of Mocetauc (perhaps Mugdock near Milngavie)*, and his brother *Talorgan mac Fergus* was killed (*in contention for the Pictish throne and fighting on the side of the Britons*), as was King Tewdeur of Alt Clut, but the Britons held the battlefield.

Óengus retreated to his capital at Forteviot in Perthshire, and remained there as king of the Picts until his death in 761 - after having ruled thirty long years.

King Áed Finn (the White) Airechtech of Dálriada *son of King Eochaid mac Echdach of the Cenél nGabrán of Dálriada - a descendant of King Domnall Brecc (Donuel) mac Eochaid of Dálriada* came to power in Dálriada and rejected the sovereignty of Óengus I.

In the north the activities of Óengus I had displaced many Pictish lords who spilled over into Northumbria and King Eadberht of Northumbria fought many battles to subdue them.

Óengus I single-mindedly pursued his war on the Britons and in 756 combined forces with Eadberht, in the eighteenth year of his reign, and *King Unust of the Picts*, and led the combined armies to the town of Dumbarton - to effectively destroy Strathclyde's independence - but a reversal saw them nearly destroyed.

Óengus I must have been driven by revenge since he derived no advantage from the victory - nearly succeeding in capturing Dunbar. In fact he lost hope of controlling Scotland south of the Clyde which now fell under Northumbrian control.

The Britons accepted terms there on August 1st... but on the tenth day of the same month the whole army which Óengus led from Ouania (Govan) to Niwanbirig almost perished.

*The defeat here for Eadberht and Óengus I by Æthelbald's Mercians corresponds with the claim that Óengus I founded a church there as a thanksgiving to St. Andrew the Apostle for saving him after a defeat in Mercia.*

The last years of Óengus I were plagued with internal troubles which prevented foreign adventures.

By his death in 761 - "aged probably more than seventy" - he may have been in control of only the Maetae.

From the beginning of his reign to the end he perpetrated bloody crimes, like a tyrannical slaughterer.

King **Brude V** (Bridei) **mac Fergus** of Fortriu (761-763) *son of Fergus - and brother of Óengus I* succeeded his brother (Óengus I) as king of the Southern Picts.

Dynastic squabbles continued throughout his reign.

**Ciniod II** (Cinioch, Cináed, Kenneth) **mac Wredech** (Uuredach, Feredach) (763-775 or 776) son of Uurecech (Feradach) son of King Selbach mac Ferchair son of King Fercher Fota (the Tall) of Dálriada son of Feredach mac Fergussa - a descendant of legendary King Loarn mac Eirc son of Erc son of Eochaid Muinremuir - eponymous ancestor of the Cenél Loairn also known as Kenneth mac Feredach (Feradaig) was king of the Picts...

The wars with the Scots of Dálriada continued as they re-established their independence under their leader Aed Find.

In 768 Aed Find invaded Pictish territory with the men of Dálriada and fought in the fierce *Battle of Fortriu* with Cinioch - the battle may have been fought in Leinster with Cináed mac Flainn of the Uí Failgi as the victor over Áed [ ] and thereafter Áed Find felt strong enough top declare his independence.

Upon regaining their freedom, the Scots threw out the laws of Óengus I and substituted them with the "Laws of Áed."

In 774 King Alhred of Northumbria husband of Osgifu, (either the daughter of King Oswulf of Northumbria son of King Eadberht of Northumbria or the daughter of King Eadberht of Northumbria) fled to Ciniod's court when he was deposed and was granted asylum.

Ciniod II died in 775. While no sons of Ciniod are known, his supposed daughter Eithne ingen Cinadhon died in 778.

**Alpin II mac Wroid** (Feret) (776-781) or (775-778) son of Uuroid - was king of the Picts of Dálriada from 777 to his death in 778.

His daughter may have been the wife of Alpin II mac Eochaid, a sub-king of Irish Dálriada or Galloway, which was part of Strathclyde, and mother of **King Kenneth (Cináed) mac Alpin of Alba**.

**Dubh Talorgan II** (Talorcen) mac Drust (Drustan) "the Surly" (779-781) or (781-782) was probably the Dubthalorc (Black Talorc) who ruled over the Maetae and died in 781 (or 782).

The first son of a Pictish king to become king, he was a king of the Picts on the side of Mounth.

**Drust VIII** (Drest) **mac Talorcen** (781-782) or (783) son of Talorgan II son (or brother) of Óengus I son of Fergus ruled the Northern Picts only - before being driven into exile or killed.

**Talorcen III mac Angus** (782 or 783-785) son of Óengus I son of Fergus - was king of the Picts from 783 to 785.

A rare case in Pictish history of a son succeeding his father (Óengus I) and his son (Drust VIII) - suggesting that the matrilineal system of choosing a king was beginning to break down.

Despite his pedigree he was just as ineffective as his predecessors.

The dominant kingdom in eastern Scotland before the Viking Age was the northern Pictish kingdom of Fortriu on the shores of the Moray Firth.

By the 9th century, the Gaels of Dál Riata (Dálriada) were subject to the kings of Fortriu of the family of Caustantín mac Fergus (Constantine son of Fergus) of the Picts.

Constantine's family dominated Fortriu after 789 - and perhaps from around 730.

**Conall (Canaul) mac Taidg** (Tadg, Tarl'a) (785-789) son of Tarl'a the Pict ruled at Forteviot in Perthshire until 789 when civil war again broke out and he was defeated in battle and driven out by King Caustantín (Constantine) mac Fergus of the Picts of Fortriu.

He found refuge with Domnall mac Constantine of Dálriada son of King Caustantín mac Fergus of the Picts and succeeded him there as Conall I in 805.

He invaded Dálriada and was challenged by his brother Conall II mac Áedáin (Aedan) son of Aedan and Tadg the Pict - a king in Scotland and a sub-king in Dálriada - and fell in the *Battle of Cenn Tire (Kintyre)* circa 807.

**King Caustantín (Constantine) mac Fergus** of the Picts (789-820) son of a Pictish mother and King Fergus mac Echdach of Dálriada son of King Eochaid mac Echdach of the Cenél nGabráin of Dálriada - a descendant of King Domnall Brecc (Donuel) mac Eochaid of Dálriada came to the throne by defeating Conall in battle in Pictland and depositing him in 789 - and reigned 35 or 45 years.

Unlike his hapless predecessor, Caustantín was a true Pictish king. He defeated *Conall mac Áedan* in 809 and ruled over the whole of Scotland, including Dálriada.

He was the first king who not only united the Picts and Scots, but was recognized by the Scots as "Ard Rígh" - their High King.

It was during his reign that **Viking raids** on the western coasts of Scotland continued - the first recorded in 794 in the *Annals of Ulster*.

From that date they continued unabated every year from bases in the Hebrides.

Caustantín could not challenge them at sea and the Vikings would not fight on land so instead he fortified his interior.

A patron of the Northumbrian monasteries [ ] he built a new citadel at Forteviot and founded a new church at Dunkeld in Perthshire in 815 (or 816) - after the deaths of Charlemagne and Pope Leo III.

Many of the monks from Iona which had been sacked repeatedly in 795, 802 and 806 were moved there.

Of the remainder most went to Kells in Ireland in 814.

Caustantín also became king of Dálriada (811-820) by claiming the throne after the death of Conall II in 811, thus becoming **the second king to rule over both Picts and Scots**.

Caustantín died in 820.

Domnall son of Caustantín may have ruled Dálriada from around 811 to 835.

**King Óengus II** (Onuist, Angus) **mac Fergus** of the Picts (820-834) son of a Pictish mother and King Fergus mac Echdach of Dálriada son of King Eochaid mac Echdach of the Cenél nGabráin of Dálriada - a descendant of King Domnall Brecc (Donuel) mac Eochaid of Dálriada... - and a brother of Caustantín was a devoutly Christian king who established St. Andrew the Apostle as the principal seat of religious learning among the Picts.

In 832 he expelled an English invasion planned by a warlord called Athelstan, who had gathered an army on the "Plain of Merc," probably Mercia, near the River Tyne.

Praying fervently for some days before the battle, St. Andrew appeared to Óengus in a dream and promised him the victory if he dedicated a tenth part of his inheritance to God.

On the day of the *Battle of Athelstaneford* in East Lothian, Óengus and his army arose to be greeted by the spectacular sight of coruscating white clouds forming a huge St. Andrew's cross which gleamed blindingly against the azure blue of the morning sky.

With a great cheer, they drew their swords and charged the Saxons, slaughtering them to a man.

The English king's head was impaled on a stake and planted on an island, probably Inchcolm in the Firth of Forth, and no doubt facing south.

Óengus II died in 834 - and was succeeded by his nephew Drust IX mac Caustantín.

**Drust IX mac Caustantín** (Constantine) (834-837) son of King Caustantín mac Fergus of the Picts son of a Pictish mother and King Fergus mac Echdach of Dálriada son of King Eochaid mac Echdach of the Cenél nGabráin of Dálriada - a descendant of King Domnall Brecc (Donuel) mac Eochaid of Dálriada and Talorc IV mac Uthoil (Fathoil, Fochal) (834-837) ruled jointly.

Drust ruled the Southern Picts and Talorc ruled the Northern Picts.

**Talorgen mac Wthoil** (834-837) or (837) son of Wthoil was a National Guardian, or Regent, rather than a joint king of the Picts.

**Éoganan mac Óengusa** (Uven or Ewan mac Angus) (837-839) son of  
Óengus II mac Fergussa of Dálriada son of a Pictish mother  
and King Fergus mac Echdach of Dálriada son of King Eochaid  
mac Echdach of the Cenél nGabráin of Dálriada - a descendant  
of King Domnall Brecc (Donuel) mac Eochaid of Dálriada did  
not receive a portion of the kingdom when his father died. This  
may have been out of personal choice or because he was too  
young.

Alternatively he may have been elected when the Viking raids  
became intolerable and in 837 he appears as ruler over both  
Dálriada and the Picts. Of the other successors only Áed II mac  
Boantna of Dálriada was left in Dálriada.

In 839 a force of Norwegian and Danish Vikings led by the  
Norse/Irish warlord Guthfrith mac Fergus of Mann landed on  
Galloway, then ruled by **Kenneth (Cináed) mac Alpin**, and  
marched into Pictish territory.

Near St. Fillans Ewan and Aed suffered a disastrous defeat. The  
entire Pictish royal family was almost decimated. Control over  
Dálriada and Southern Pictland was lost to Kenneth (Cináed)  
mac Alpin who used it as a springboard toward the permanent  
union of all Scotland under his rule.

Éoganan, together with his brother *Bran* and "Áed mac Boanta and  
others almost innumerable" perished in a great disaster upon the  
men of Fortriu at the hands of the Viking (Norse) heathen in  
839.

Along with his uncle King Caustantín mac Fergus of the Picts,  
Éoganan appears to be a patron of Northumbrian monasteries.

The line of descent of Pictish kings was broken... and the decimation  
of the Pictish warrior class was the most decisive point at which  
the pendulum of control swung towards the Scots.

*Pictland eventually merged with Scotian Dálriada through  
intermarriage to become Scotland.*

vii

### Competitors for the Throne of Pictland

Following the disaster that decimated the Pictish royal house in 839 a  
number of claimants to the throne appeared:

Pictland was in a state of considerable turmoil during this period, and  
they may have been ruling and defending different parts of the  
kingdom at the same time, fighting the invading Norsemen as  
well as the Scots, ever looking to expand from Dálriada.

**Ururad** or Wrad (Feradach, Ferach) **mac Bargoit** (Bargoch) (839-  
842) reigned jointly with Brude VI for his final year... and may  
have been murdered.

**Brude VI** (Brudei) **mac Dergart** (Ferat) (842-843) son of Ururad...  
was almost certainly murdered.

**Ciniod** (Cináed, Kineth, Kinat) **mac Ferat** (circa 843) son of  
Ururad... ruled the Northern Picts jointly with his brother Brude  
VI until he was expelled by Brude VII.

**Brude VII mac Fethal** (Fochal) (843-845) son of Fochel (Uuthoil)  
ruled the Northern Picts... he contested with Kenneth (Cináed)  
mac Alpin but was deposed by Drust X.

The Pictish kingdom began to suffer the most terrible onslaughts  
imaginable from both land and sea.  
Norse incursions were becoming increasingly frequent and savage.

**Drust X mac Fethal** (Ferat) (845-848) son of Ururad the Northern  
Picts turned to the Scots of Dálriada - a joint council was  
urgently called and his nobles were invited to a feast at Scone  
where they were treacherously murdered.

Drust X was *the last king of the Picts*.

### The Treason of Cináed mac Alpin

In 841, Cináed mac Alpin attacked the remnants of the Pictish army  
and defeated them.

He then invited Drust X and the remaining Pictish nobles to Scone to  
settle the issue of Dálriada's freedom - and mac Alpin's claim to the  
Dálriadan crown.

Faced with a recently victorious mac Alpin in the south and a  
devastated army in the north, Drust, as well as all claimants to  
the Pictish throne from the seven royal houses attended a great  
banquet at Scone.

The Gaels came secretly armed to Scone.

The Pictish nobles were plied with drinks and became quite drunk.  
Once the Picts were drunk, the Gaels allegedly pulled bolts from the  
benches, causing the Picts to fall into concealed earthen hollows  
under the benches;

additionally, the traps were sown with sharp blades, such that the

falling Picts impaled themselves.

Unable to defend themselves, the surviving Pictish Lords were  
systematically butchered to the man from above and their  
bodies, clothes and ornaments plundered.

Kenneth mac Alpin became king of both realms, heralding back to his  
maternal ancestry to establish his claim to the throne of Pictavia  
and inheriting Dálriada from his father.

He merged the two into one body - the Kingdom of Alba, (or the  
Gaelic Kingdom of Scotland).

viii

### House of Alpin (848-1034)



In 847 Gaelic King **Cináed mac Alpin** (**Kenneth mac Alpin**) **An Ferbasach** ("the Conqueror") of Dálriada, *Rex Pictorum* (King of the Picts),<sup>222</sup> (810 - 13 February 858) son of *Alpin mac Echdach son of Eochaid (or Eochu)* - his mother probably descended from the royal house of Fortriu formally united the kingdom of the Picts to his own to form the Kingdom of Alba. *Alpin son of Achay (Alpin son of Eochu)* was killed in a war with the Picts in 836.

Being a descendant of the two royal houses of Pictland and Dálriada made Kenneth, with a legitimate claim to either throne, acceptable to both Picts and Scots.

The situation in Pictland and Dálriada had become critical as the two countries were suffering badly from unceasing attacks by Viking pirates.

Kenneth was king of Dálriada for two years before being crowned the Pictish king in 843 - *probably at Scone* - amid fierce resistance from several contumacious Pictish sub-kings who regarded him as an arrogant usurper.

His reign is dated from 843, but it was *probably* not until 848 that he defeated the last of rivals for power.

He was ruthless, strong-willed, daring, cultured and religious.

Starting with the Scots, he took a force of battle-hardened warriors westward to claim the crown of the Dálriadans. They had been without a proper High King since 729 - and over the next two years he established his own government and rule of law among them.

He then turned east and proceeded to Perth, bringing the *Lia Fáil* - the Coronation Stone of Scone - the Scots "Stone of Destiny" with him from Dunstaffnage Castle in Argyll to Scone, ancient capital of the Picts.

In 849 he also brought the Holy relics of St. Columba from Iona to the church of Dunkeld in Perthsire - that had been founded by King Caustantín mac Fergus of the Picts.

An extremely capable captain of men, Kenneth invaded Saxonia (Old Saxony) six times with his combined army of Picts and Scots; he burnt Dunbar, captured Melrose and expelled the English from most of southern Scotland, extending his control as far south as the River Tweed.

Consolidating his rule over the whole kingdom took around eight years to compete - but by the end of it all he had achieved more than any of the kings of Scots or Picts before him.

The Vikings, though, were laying waste to Pictland, reaching far into the interior.

Chief Gofraid mac Fergusa, toisech Innsi Gall (lord of the foreign isles, that is of the Hebrides, and *perhaps* the Isle of Mann) of Airgíalla went to Alba, to strengthen Dálriada, at the request of Kenneth mac Alpin.

The reign of Kenneth also saw an increased degree of Norse settlement in the outlying areas of modern Scotland: Shetland, Orkney, Caithness, Sutherland, the Western Isles and the Isle of Mann, and part of Ross were settled.

The links between Kenneth's kingdom and Ireland were weakened, and those with southern England and the continent almost broken.

Kenneth and his successors were forced to consolidate their position in the kingdom, and the union between the Picts and the Gaels began to strengthen.

By the time of King Donald II mac Causantín of the Picts of Scotland *son of King Causantín mac Cináeda (Constantine I) of the Picts son of King Cináed mac Alpin of Dálriada*, the kings would be called neither Kings of the Gaels or of the Scots, but kings of Alba.

King Kenneth mac Alpin of the Picts died from a tumor on 13 February 858 at the palace of *Cinnbelachoir, perhaps near Scone*.

The title "king of Alba" was not used until Kenneth's grandsons, Donald II and King Constantine II of Scotland *son of King Áed of the Picts*.

With the death of King Kenneth mac Alpin the History of the Pictish Kings comes to an end - at least as far as the Picts are concerned. After a brief period of adjustment that lasted a couple of generations, the ancient kingdom of Alba was to begin a process of fundamental change, both politically and culturally, that would eventually transform the fiercely independent Dark Age society with its own ancient customs and laws, into the modern nation of Scotland.

Kenneth left two sons: Causantín (Constantine I) and Áed mac Cináeda of the White Flowers, who were later kings, and *at least* two daughters:

One daughter, [ ] ingen Cináed, married King Rhun ab Arthgal of Alt Clut and Clyde (Strathclyde) *son or King Artgal of Alt Clut and Strathclyde son of Domnagual IV of Alt Clut - last king of the North*: King Eochaid mac Rhun of the Picts being the result of this union.



Máel Muire

**Máel Muire** ("servant of Mary") ingen Cináeda daughter of King Kenneth mac Alpin of the Picts of Dálriada married two important Irish kings of the Uí Néill:

Her first husband was High King Áed Findliath (the Fair Warrior) of Ireland and King of Ailech (died 20 November 879) - a member of the northern Uí Néill kindred of the Cenél nEógain, *son of High King Niall Caille of Ireland and Gormflaith ingen Donncadha "of the dazzling white complexion" daughter of High King Domnall Brecc (Donuel) mac Eochaid of Dálriada*.

<sup>222</sup> **Cináed mac Alpin** (**Kenneth mac Alpin**) **An Ferbasach** ("the Conqueror") son of *Alpin mac Echdach son of Eochaid son of King Áed Find Airechtech mac Eochaid of Dálriada son of King Eochaid mac Echdach of the Cenél nGabráin of Dálriada son of King Eochaid mac Domangairt of Dálriada son of King Domangairt mac Domnaill of Dálriada son of King Domnall Brecc (Donuel) mac Eochaid of Dálriada son of King Eochaid Buide of Dálriada son of King Áedan mac Gabráin of Dálriada son of King Gabráin mac Domangairt the Traitor of Dálriada*. His maternal grandfather was King Caustantín mac Fergus of the Picts *son of a Pictish mother and King Fergus mac Echdach of Dálriada son of King Eochaid mac Echdach of the Cenél nGabráin of Dálriada - a descendant of High King Domnall Brecc (Donuel) mac Eochaid of Dálriada*.

*King Domnall Midi (Domhnall mac Murchada) of Ireland and Ailbhe ingen Ailello - being his third wife.*

The son of Áed Findliath and Máel Muire was High King Niall Glúndub mac Áedo of the Cenél nEógain of Ireland *ancestor of the O'Neill dynasty.*

Their second son was King Donall of Aileach *ancestor of family of MacLaughlin, some of whom were monarchs of Ireland, and also of the family of O'Donnell, whose chief in later years was slain at the Battle of Down in 1117 by Sir John Courcey, the first Anglo-Norman Earl of Ulster.*

Their son was Domnall mac Aedo Findliath O'Neill *father of Flann mac Domnaill,*

Their daughter, [ ] ingen Áeda, was either consort or wife of King Óláfur "Hviti" the White Ingjaldsson of Dublin *son of Ekki vitað and the Hiberno-Norse warlord Petty King Ingjald "the White" Helgasson of Ireland son of Helgi Olafsson "the Bright"<sup>223</sup> and Tora Sigurdsdottir<sup>224</sup> daughter of Sigurd Orm-i-øje ("Snake-eye") Ragnarsson and Heluna Bleja daughter of King Ælla II of Northumbria and Eahlund Ella Wessex Ellasdatter.*

Their daughter was Eitne ingen Áeda, wife of *Flannacán av Brega.*

After Áed's death in 879, Máel Muire married her second husband, High King Flann Sinna of Ireland of Clann Cholmáin of the southern Uí Néill and King of Mide *son of Máel Sechnaill mac Máele Ruanaid of Clan Chomáin, a branch of the southern Uí Néill, and Lann sister of King Cerball mac Dúnlainge of Ossory (in south-eastern Ireland).*

Máel bore him a daughter, Ligach ingen Flainn (died 923), wife of King Síl nÁedo Sláine of Brega, king of Mide and High King of "all" Ireland *son of High King Máel Sechnaill mac Máele Ruanaid of "all" Ireland, whose own son Congalach of Knoweth (died 956) would eventually become king of Tara.*

*Domnall was the son of Máel Muire and High King Flann Sinna of Ireland.*

As the wife and mother of kings, when Máel Muire died in 913, her death was reported by the *Annals of Ulster*, where she was identified not as Flann's widow but as Cináed's daughter - an unusual thing for the male-centered chronicles of the age.

**King Domnall mac Alpín (Donald I MacAlpin)** of the Picts (858-862) *son of Alpín mac Echdach son of Eochaid (or Eochu) - his mother probably descended from the royal house of Fortriu followed his brother Cináed (Kenneth I) to the Pictish throne.*

Domnall reigned for four years, from his brother's death in 858 to his own in 862. In his time the Gaels with their king made the rights and laws of the kingdom, [that are called the laws of] King Áed Find of Dalriada *son of Eochaid in Fortevoit.*

Domnall was the *supposed* great-grandson of Áed Find.

The *Laws of Áed Find* are entirely lost, but it has been assumed that, like the laws attributed to Giric and Constantine II (Causantín mac Áeda) - *infer*, these related to the church an in particular to the granting of privileges and immunities common elsewhere.

The significance of Fortevoit as the site of this law-making, along with Kenneth's death there and Constantine's later gathering at nearby Scone, may point to this as being the heartland of the son's of Alpin's support.

In war, Domnall was a vigorous soldier... *he is said to have been assassinated at Scone.*

Although Domnall was said to have been childless, it has been suggested that Giric was a son of Domnall [ ] rather than the commonly supposed Dúngail.

Domnall died on 13 April 862, either at the palace of Cinnbelachoir (location unknown) or at Rathinveralmond (also unknown, and may be the same place, presumed to be near the junction of the Almond and the Tay, near Scone). He was buried on Iona.



Constantine I

**King Causantín (Constantine I) mac Cináeda** of the Picts (862-877) *son of Gaelic King Cined mac Alpin (Kenneth mac Alpin) An Ferbasach ("the Conqueror") of Dálriada, Rex Pictorum (King of the Picts), son of Alpín mac Echdach son of Eochaid (or Eochu) succeeded his uncle King Domnall mac Alpín (Donald I MacAlpin) of the Picts following the later's death.*

Causantín's (Constantine I) reign witnessed increased activity by Vikings in northern Britain, based in Ireland, in Northumbria and in northern Britain.

Viking armies were led by a small group of men who may have been kinsmen.

Among those are: Ívarr (in Old Norse) (Ímar in Irish), who was active from East Anglia to Ireland; Halfdán (Albdann in Irish, Healfdene in Old English); and Amláib Conung (Óláfr in Old Norse).

### *The Great Heathen Army*



Ragnar Lodbrok

<sup>223</sup> *Helgi Olafsson "the Bright" was son of King Óláfur Gudrodsson Guðrðarson of Ireland son of Guðrð Halfdansson "the Magnificent" son of King Halfdan Olafsson "Whiteshanks" Kvitbein and Åsa (Asa) Eysteinsson.*

<sup>224</sup> *Tora Sigurdsdottir was daughter of Sigurd Orm-i-øje ("Snake-eye") Ragnarsson son of the legendary Norse rukler and hero Ragnar Lodbrok, the Scourge of France and England, and Warrior-Queen Aslaug (Aslög) Kraka Sigurdsdatter daughter of Sigurd "Fafnibana" Sigmundsson of Denmark and Brynhild Budlasdatter "the Shieldmaiden."*

In 865 the **Great Heathen Army** led by the sons of Ragnar Lodbrok *son of Sigurd Ring and Alfiðr*, probably a part of the force that had been active in Francia, landed in East Anglia.

While the kingdoms of East Anglia, Mercia and Northumbria were under attack, other Viking armies were active in the far north.

In 866, Amlíab Conung, the first Norse king of Dublin, and Auisle or Óisle (Old Norse: Ási or Auðgísí) *sons of the king of Lochlann - and brother of Ívarr*, kings of the foreigners, brought an army to Fortriu and obtained tribute and hostages.

Having obtained tribute from the East Anglican King Edmund the Martyr *possibly son of King Æthelweard of East Anglia*, the Great Army moved north, seizing York, chief city of the Northumbrians.

In 867, Auisle was killed by Amlíab in a dispute over Amlíab's wife, the daughter of Cináed: It is unclear whether this woman was the daughter of Cináed mac Alpin or King Cináed mac Conaing of Brega, who had been drowned by Máel Sechnaill in 851.

While Amlíab and Auisle were in north Britain, High King Áed Findliath of Ireland took advantage to destroy the longphorts (Viking ship enclosures or shore fortress) along the northern coasts of Ireland.

Áed Findliath was married to Máel Muire *daughter of Cináed mac Alpin*: She later married Áed's successor Flann Sinna.

The Great Heathen Army defeated an attack on York by the two rivals of the Northumbrian throne: Osberht and Ælla, who had put aside their differences in the face of a common enemy.

Nearly all the Northumbrians were routed - and both would-be kings were killed in the failed assault, probably on 21 March 867.

Following this, the survivors made peace with the pagans, and the leaders of the Great Army installed Ecgberht I king under their own dominion.

*Ecgberht reigned for six years, as the Great Army's tax-collector over the Northumbrians beyond the Tyne, until the Northumbrians rebelled against the Danes and their collaborators in 872, expelled Ecgberht, and their Archbishop Wulhere of York (who found refuge with King Burgred of Mercia).*

*Ecgberht died in 873 - and was succeeded by King Ricsige of Northumbria.*

In 870, Amlíab and Ívarr attacked Dumbarton Rock, where the River Leven meets the River Clyde, the chief place of the kingdom of Alt Clut, south-western neighbour of Pictland.

The siege lasted four months before the fortress fell to the Vikings who returned to Ireland with many prisoners. "Angles, Britons and Picts," in 871.

Dumbarton Rock was largely abandoned and Govan replaced it as the chief place of the kingdom of Strathclyde, as *Alt Clut ws later known - a Brythonic kingdom in the Hēn Ogledd ("the Old North"), the Brythonic-speaking part of north-western England and south-western Scotland*.

King Artgal of Alt Clut and Strathclyde did not long survive these events, being killed "at the instigation" of Causantín (Constantine I) *son of Cináed mac Alpin (Kenneth mac Alpin)* two years later.

Artgal's son and successor, King Rhun ab Arthgal of Alt Clut and Clyde (Strathclyde), was married to [ ] ingen Cináed *sister of Causantín*.

*Amlíab returned to Pictland in 871 or 872 to collect further tribute. His ally Ívarr died in 873.*

Following successful campaigns against East Anglia and Northumbria, the Great Heathen Army, led by Ívarr, Halfdán and Ubba *the sons of Ragnar Lodbrok son of Sigurd Ring and Alfiðr*, advanced through Mercia, arriving in Nottingham in 867, where King Burgred, aided by his brother-in-law King Æthelred of Wessex and King Alfred the Great of the Anglo-Saxons, drove off a force of 10,000 invaders.

The armies of Wessex and Mercia did no serious fighting, and the Vikings were allowed to remain through the winter.

In 874 the march of the Vikings from Lindsey to Repton drove Burgred from his kingdom after they sacked Tamworth.

After Burgred left they appointed Ceolwulf II, the last king of independent Mercia, to replace him, demanding oaths of loyalty. *Burgred retired to Rome and died and was buried there.*

In 875, a Viking army laid waste to Pictavia again. Amlíab Conung was killed by Causantín in the *Battle of Dollar* between the Danes and the Picts - and a great slaughter of the Picts resulted.

In 877, shortly after building a church for the *Céli Dé (Culdee)* at St. Andrews, Causantín was captured and executed (or perhaps killed in battle) after defending against Viking raiders.

*Some believe he was beheaded on a Fife beach, following the Battle of Fife Ness, near Crail. Others place Causantín's death at Inverdovat (by Newport-on-Tay) (at the "Black Cave").*

King Causantín (Constantine I) mac Cináeda of the Picts was buried in Iona.



King Áed mac Cináeda of the White Flowers

King **Áed mac Cináeda of the White Flowers** of the Picts (876 or 877-878) son of Gaelic King *Cináed mac Alpin (Kenneth mac Alpin) An Ferbasach ("the Conqueror") of Dálriada, Rex Pictorum (King of the Picts) son of Alpín mac Echdach son of Eochaid (or Eochu)* succeeded his brother King Causantín (Constantine I) mac Cináeda of the Picts following the later's death in 878.

He was slain by his successor Giric and his associates in Strathallan or in the civitas of Nrurim (*Nrurim is unidentified*)

*Áed's son, Constantine II mac Áeda, became the first King of Alba (later to be named Scotland) in 900.*

King **Giric** mac Dúngal Mac Rath ("Son of Fortune") of the Picts (879-889) may have ruled jointly with **Eochaid** "the Briton of the Clyde" *son of King Rhun ab Arthgal of Alt Clut and Strathclyde and [ ] ingen Cináed daughter of King Cináed mac Alpin (Kenneth mac Alpin) of Dálriada [- the "mysterious" woman of Dún Guaire (Bamburgh)].*

He reigned for twelve years - and subdued to himself all Ireland (Hibernia) [or Bernicia] and nearly all England.

Giric was the first to give liberty to the Scottish church, which was in servitude to secular oppression up until that time, after the custom and fashion of the Picts, and adopt Irish customs.

Constantine II and his cousin Donald II *may have* passed Giric's reign in exile in Ireland where their aunt Máel Muire was wife of two successive High Kings of Ireland: Áed Findliath and Flann Sinna.

In Giric's second year, High King Áed Findliath (the Fair Warrior) of Ireland *son of High King Niall Caille of Ireland* died on 20 November 879.

In his ninth year, on the very day of St. Cirici (Cyrus), on 16 June 885, a solar eclipse occurred. Eochaid and his foster-father and guardian (Giric) were deposed and expelled from the kingdom. Giric died in 889 at Dundurn in Strathearn - and was buried in Iona.

Constantine II *may have* returned to Pictland where Donald II, "the rough one who thought relics and psalms of little worth," became king.



Donald II Domnall Dásachtach



Malcolm I

King **Domnall mac Causantín (Donald II) Dásachtach** ("the Madman") of the Picts (889-900) *son of King Causantín (Constantine I) mac Cináeda of the Picts son of Gaelic King Cináed mac Alpin (Kenneth mac Alpin) An Ferbasach ("the Conqueror") of Dálriada, Rex Pictorum (King of the Picts)*, *son of Alpín mac Echdach son of Eochaid (or Eochu) became king on the death or deposition of King Giric mac Dúngal of the Picts, the date of which is not certainly known but usually placed in 889, and ruled for 11 years.*

The Northmen (Norsemen or *Normanni*) wasted Pictland at this time. The *Battle of Innisibsolian* between the Scots and the Danes occurred in his reign - where the Scots had the victory.

In 900, he was killed in the *Battle of Opidum Fother* (modern Dunnottar in the Mearns) by the Gales - rather than the Norseman Harald Fairhair - and was buried at Iona.

Domnall mac Causantín (Donald II) was **the last King of the Picts**.

*Donald's son Máel Coluim mac Domnaill (Malcolm I) became King of the Scots when his cousin, King Causantín mac Aeda (Constantine II) of Scotland son of King Áed mac Cináeda of the White Flowers of the Picts son of Gaelic King Cináed mac Alpin (Kenneth mac Alpin) An Ferbasach ("the Conqueror") of Dálriada, Rex Pictorum (King of the Picts) son of Alpín mac Echdach son of Eochaid (or Eochu) abdicated to become a monk.*

*In 904, King Ead of the Picts died in a battle against the Uí Ímair - the royal Norse Dynasty of Ivar whose members ruled much of the Irish Sea region, the Kingdom of Dublin, the western coast of Scotland, including the Hebrides and some part of Northern England.*

ix

#### Kings of Alba (Scotland)



Constantine II

King **Causantín mac Áeda (Constantine II)** of Scotland (before 869 - 952) *reigned 900-943 son of King Áed mac Cináeda of the White Flowers of the Picts son of Gaelic King Cináed mac Alpin (Kenneth mac Alpin) An Ferbasach ("the Conqueror") of Dálriada, Rex Pictorum (King of the Picts) son of Alpín mac Echdach son of Eochaid (or Eochu) succeeded Donald II.*

The origins of the Kingdom of Alba, in northern Great Britain, are traced to Constantine's lifetime.

The core of the kingdom was formed by the lands around the River Tay.

Its southern limit was the River Forth, northwards it extended towards the Moray Firth and *perhaps* to Caithness, while its western limits are uncertain.

His reign, like those of his predecessors, was dominated by the actions of Viking rulers in the British Isles, particularly the Uí Ímair ("the grandsons of Ímar or Ivar (Ívarr) the Boneless *son of Ragnar Lodbrok*" - a Viking leader and commander of the Great Heathen Army and founder of the Uí Ímair dynasty which dominated the Irish Sea throughout the Viking Age).

In the third year of his reign Dunkeld "and all Albania (Alba)" was attacked and plundered by Vikings.

These Northmen may have been some of those who were driven out of Dublin in 902, but also could have been the same group who had defeated Domnaill in 902.

The Northmen were killed in the *Battle of Strath Erenn*, where Ímar or Ivar (Ívarr) the Boneless *son of Ragnar Lodbrok son of Sigurd Ring and Alfið* and many others perished at the hands of the men of Fortriu in 904.

The defeat of the Northmen is attributed to intercession of St. Columba following fasting and prayer.

In the sixth year of his reign, Constantine met Bishop Cellach I, first bishop of the Scots, upon the *Hill of Belief* (the hill of credulity) near the royal city of Scone, intending to heal a rift between king and church, and pledged themselves that the laws and disciplines of the faith, and the rights of the churches and gospels, should be kept *pertier cum Scottis* - that is, in conformity with the [customs of the] Gaels.

Marking the demise of the Pictish church to the reforming Gaels. An important step in the gaelicisation of the lands east of Drum Alban and endorsing Constantine's kingship, *prefiguring later royal inaugurations at Scone*.



Queen Æthelflæd

Queen Æthelflæd, Iron Lady of the Mercians,<sup>225</sup> allied with the Irish and northern rulers against the Norsemen on the Irish sea coasts of Northumbria.

An Irish fleet from the kingdom of Ulaid was defeated by Vikings "on the coast of England" about this time.

In the eighth year of Constantine's reign, King Cormac mac Cuilennáin of Munster, an Irish bishop, died - on 13 September 908 - killed fighting in Leinster, *probably* attempting to restore the fortunes of the kings of Munster by reimposing authority over that province.

*In Constantine's time, his brother, Domnall (Dyfnwall I), ruler of the kingdom of the (Strathclyde) Britons died, and Domnall (Dyfnwall II) son of Áed, heir designate of Ailech was elected. Furthermore, Flann Sinna and Niall Glúndub also died.*

From 914 onwards, Viking ships were in the Irish sea.

By 916 fleets under Sitric Cáech ("One-Eyed") and Ragnall ua Ímair, a Norse over-lord of northern Britain, *said to be* grandsons of Ímar, (that is, they belonged to the same Uí Ímair kindred as the Ímar who was killed in 904), were very active in Ireland.

Sitric inflicted a heavy defeat on the armies of Leinster and retook Dublin in 917.

The following year Ragnall returned across the Irish sea intent on establishing himself as king at York.

Queen Æthelflæd had been negotiating with the Northumbrians to obtain their submission, but her death on 12 June 918 at Tamworth, Staffordshire, put an end to this, and her successor, her brother Edward the Elder,<sup>226</sup> was occupied with securing control of Mercia.

Since 913, the northern part of Northumbria, and *perhaps* the whole kingdom, had *probably* been ruled by Ealdred of Northumbria *son of Eadwulf II of Northumbria, king of the Saxons of the north - a favorite of King Alfred the Great*, a friend of King Edward the Elder.

Ealdred was driven from his lands, whether all of Northumbria or merely the northern part which had once been Bernicia is debated, by Ragnall ua Ímair, either in or before 914, or alternatively as late as 918.

Ealdred sought refuge with King Causantín mac Áeda (Constantine II) of Scotland, and the two fought Ragnall at the *Battle of Corbridge* in 918.

The Norse army divided itself into four columns: Earl Ottir Iarla "the Black" and Gragabai led one; Golfrith grandson of Ímair led another; and the "young lords" led a third battalion.

There was also a battalion in ambush led by Ragnall, which had been hidden behind a hill so that the men of Scotland did not see.

The Scotsmen routed the three battalions which they saw, and made a great slaughter of the heathens, including Ottir and Gragabai. Ragnall, however, then attacked the rear of the Scotsmen, and made a slaughter of them, although none of their kings or mormaers ("Great Stewards" or "Sea Lords") among the men of Alba were cut off (and killed).

Nightfall caused the battle to be broken off.

The English had fought amongst the Norsemen.

After Corbridge, Ragnall enjoyed *only* a short respite.

<sup>225</sup> Queen Æthelflæd, Iron Lady of the Mercians *eldest daughter of King Alfred the Great of Wessex of the Anglo-Saxons (only child of King Æthelwulf of Wessex and his first wife Osburh daughter of Osiac) and Queen Ealhswith (daughter of Ealdorman Æthelred Mucil of the Gaini - an old Mercian tribal group - and Eadburh, a member of the mercian royal family, and a descendant of King Coenwulf of Mercia)*.

<sup>226</sup> Edward the Elder *son of King Alfred the Great of Wessex of the Anglo-Saxons (only child of King Æthelwulf of Wessex and his first wife Osburh daughter of Osiac) and Queen Ealhswith (daughter of Ealdorman Æthelred Mucil of the Gaini - an old Mercian tribal group - and Eadburh, a member of the mercian royal family, and a descendant of King Coenwulf of Mercia)*.

In the south, Alfred's son Edward had rapidly secured control of Mercia and had a burh - an Old English fortification or fortified settlement - constructed at Bakewell in the Peak District from which his armies could easily strike north.

An army from Dublin led by Ragnar's kinsman Sitric struck at north-western Mercia in 919, but in 920 or 921 Edward met with Ragnall and the other kings, who chose Edward as "father and lord."

The other kings present were: Constantine II, Ealdred *son of Eadwulf*, and the king of Strathclyde - either Dyfnwall II or, *more probably*, King Owen I of the Strathclyde Britons *and the Cumrians son of Domnall (Dyfnwall II) son of Aed - a nephew of Constantine.*

In 919 Ragnall descended upon York. He took the city and had himself proclaimed king. The Bernicians remained under him, though Ealdred and King Domnall (Dyfnwall I) of Strathclyde did homage to the king of England.

Edward the Elder died in 924. His realms were divided with the West Saxons recognizing his second son, Ælfweard of Wessex<sup>227</sup> *son of English King Edward the Elder and his second wife, Ælfflaed,* while the Mercians chose Æthelstan *son of English King Edward the Elder and his first wife, Ecgwynn*, who had been raised at Æthelstan's court.

Ælfweard died within weeks of his father and Æthelstan<sup>228</sup> was inaugurated as king of all Edward's lands in 925.

By 926 Norse King Sitric Cáech ("One-Eyed") of Dublin, Ireland and Northumbria, had *evidently* acknowledged Æthelstan as over-king, adopting Christianity and marrying a sister of Æthelstan at Tamworth.

Within the year he *may have* abandoned his new faith and repudiated his wife, but before Æthelstan and he could fight, Sitric died suddenly in 927.

His kinsman, *perhaps brother*, Norse-Gael King Gofraid ua Ímair of Dublin *son of Sitric Cáech*, who had remained as his deputy in Dublin, came from Ireland to take power in York, but failed.

Æthelstan moved quickly, seizing much of Northumbria. In less than a decade, the kingdom of the English had become *by far* the greatest power in Britain and Ireland, *perhaps* stretching as far north as the Firth of Forth.

Æthelstan faced opposition from Constantine II, from Owen of Strathclyde, and from the Welsh kings.

Gofraid, together with Sitric's young son Norse-Gael King Amlaíb (Olaf) Cuarán of Northumbria and Dublin - a patron of the Irish "fili" and Scandinavian "skalds" (elite classes of poets) - fled north and received refuge from Constantine, which led to a war with Æthelstan.

On 12 July 927, Eamont Bridge (immediately to the south of Penrith, Cumbria) was the scene of a gathering of kings from throughout Britain: Present were: Æthelstan, Constantine II, Owen of Strathclyde, King Hywel Dda of Deheubarth,<sup>229</sup> and Ealdred *son of Eadulf*.

<sup>227</sup> *Ælfweard of Wessex son of English King Edward the Elder and his second wife, Ælfflaed daughter of Æthelhelm, probably ealdorman of Wiltshire, a son of Edward's uncle, King Æthelred of Wessex son of King Æthelwulf of Wessex.*

<sup>228</sup> King Æthelstan of the Saxons and the English *son of King Edward the Elder (son of King Alfred the Great of Wessex of the Anglo-Saxons and his first wife Osburh daughter of Oslac) and Queen Ealhswif (daughter of Ealdorman Æthelred Mucil of the Gaini - an old Mercian tribal group - and Eadburh, a member of the mercian royal family, and a descendant of King Coenwulf of Mercia).*

<sup>229</sup> King Hywel Dda of Deheubarth *son of King Cadell ap Rhodri of Seisylwg - a minor kingdom in south-west Wales - son of King Rhodri the Great of the Britons of Powys and Gwynedd (son of King Merfyn Frych of Gwynedd and Nest ferch Cadell daughter of Cadell ap Brochwell son of Brochwell ap*

These kings sealed an agreement to "renounce all idolatry": that is, they would not ally with the Viking kings. This is generally seen as *the foundation of the Kingdom of England.*



Indulf captures Edinburgh from Northumbria, 954-962.

*During the conference, Æthelstan stood godfather to a son of Constantine, probably Indulf (Ildulf mac Constantine).*

Æthelstan followed up his advances in the north by securing the recognition of the Welsh kings.

For the next several years, Æthelstan's court was attended by the Welsh kings, but not by Constantine or Owen of Strathclyde.

Æthelstan's army began gathering at Winchester on 28 May 934, and reached Nottingham by June 7th.

He was accompanied by many kings, including the Welsh kings Hywel Dda, Idwal Foel, and Morgan ab Owain.

From Mercia the army went north, stopping at Chester-le-Street, before resuming the march accompanied by a fleet of ships.

Owen of Strathclyde, along with his allies Norse-Gael King Olaf III Guthfrithson of Dublin *son of Norse-Gael King Gofraid ua Ímair of Dublin son of Sitric Cáech* and Constantine II of Scotland, his overlord, were defeated by Æthelstan.

The army went as far north as Dunnottar and Fortriu, while the fleet is said to have raided Caithness, by which a larger area, including Sutherland, is probably intended.

While the attacks may have been directed at Constantine's allies, they may also have been simple looting expeditions.

The Scottish men compelled Æthelstan to return without any great victory.

A negotiated settlement may have ended matters - a son of Constantine was given as a hostage to Æthelstan and Constantine himself accompanied the English king on his return south.

Constantine witnessed a charter with Æthelstan at Buckingham on 13 September 934 in which he is described as *subregulus*, that is a king acknowledging Æthelstan's over-lordship.

The following year, Constantine was again in England at Æthelstan's court, this time at Cirencester where he appeared as a witness, appearing as the first of several subject kings, followed by Owen of Strathclyde and Hywel Dda, who subscribed to the diplomat.

*Eliseg) and Angharad ferch Meurig daughter of King Meurig of Seisylwg in south-western Wales).*

At Christmas of 935, Owen of Strathclyde was once more at Æthelstan's court along with the Welsh kings, but Constantine was not.

During Constantine's reign the rulers of the southern kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia, later the Kingdom of England, extended their authority northwards into the disputed kingdoms of Northumbria.

At first allied with the southern rulers against the Vikings, Constantine in time came into conflict with them.

Æthelstan had been successful in securing Constantine's submission in 927 and 934, but the two again fought when Constantine, allied with Owen of Strathclyde and Olaf III Guthfrithson, invaded Æthelstan's kingdom in 937,

only to be defeated at the *Great Battle of Dún Brunde (Brunanburh)* - "lamentable and terrible and cruelly fought... in which fell uncountable thousands of the Northmen. And on the other side, a multitude of Saxons fell; but Æthelstan, the king of the Saxons, obtained a great victory."

The "hoary" Constantine, by now around 60 years of age, lost his son Cellach in the battle - who was buried in an unknown place.

Owen of Strathclyde was also killed.

On 27 October 939 Æthelstan, the "pillar of the dignity of the western world" died at Malmesbury - and was succeeded by his half-brother King Edmund I of England *son of King Edward the Elder of Wessex and his third wife, Eadgifu of Kent daughter of Sigehelm, Ealdorman of Kent*, then aged 18.

Æthelstan's empire, seemingly made safe by the victory at Brunanburh, collapsed in little more than a year from his death when Amlab returned from Ireland and seized Northumbria and the Mercian Danelaw.

Edmund spent the remainder of Constantine's reign rebuilding the empire.

By the early 940s Constantine was an old man, *perhaps* more than 70 years of age.

In 943 Constantine abdicated the throne and retired to the *Céli Dé (Culdee)* monastery of St. Andrews where he was said to be an abbot - he died in 952.

The Kingdom of Alba was too new to *be said to* have a customary rule of succession, but Pictish and Irish precedents favoured an adult successor descended from Gaelic King Cináed mac Alpin (Kenneth mac Alpin).

Constantine's surviving son Indulf, *probably* baptized in 927, would have been too young to be a serious candidate for the kingship in the early-940s, and the obvious heir was his predecessor's son: He was succeeded by King Máel Coluim mac Domnaill (Malcolm I) of Scotland *son of King Domnall mac Causantín (Donald II) Dásachtach ("the Madman") of the Picts.*

Although his retirement may have been involuntary, Constantine was a devout king...

The Céli Dé were *subsequently* entrusted with many monasteries throughout the Kingdom of Alba *until replaced in the 12th century by new orders imported from France.*

*Constantine's son Indulf would become king on the death of Malcolm I.*

Seven years later, incited by Constantine, Malcolm I plundered the English as far as the River Tees, and he seized a multitude of people and many herds of cattle; and the Scots called this *the raid of Albidosorum*, that is, Nainndisi.

## II. *The House of Alpin and the Kings of Scotland continues...*

**TO BE CONTINUED**



Post-Roman Britain  
The island of Britain 450-600

This map of Britain concentrates on the British territories and kingdoms that were established during the fourth and fifth centuries, as the Saxons and Angles began their settlement of the east coast.

**WORK UNFINISHED**

#### IV. Historic Origins of the Kingdom of Scotland

i

Circa 498 - High King Fergus Mór of Ireland lead his Scots people from Ireland into Pictland and founded the Scottish kingdom of Dálriada.

King Fergus Mór of Dálriada died in 501, and he was succeeded by his son, Domangairt.

King Dumnagual Hêñ of Strathclyde died, circa 505. He was succeeded by his son, Comgall.

King Domangairt of Dálriada died in 507. He was succeeded by his son, Comgall.

Prince Gabhran mac Domangairt of Dálriada lead a Scottish party east to settle Gowrie, in 525, where he married Princess Lleian of the Britons *daughter of King Brychan of Manau Gododdin and probably niece of King Cedric of Strathclyde*.

Prince Aedan *son of Prince Gabhran mac Domangairt of Dálriada* was born circa 527.

ii

The unmarried Princess Saint Teneu (Thaney) - Scotland's first recorded rape victim, battered woman and unmarried mother - was banished from her father King Loth (Lleuddun) of Gododdin's Court at Traprain Law, circa 528.

King Loth is the eponymous king of Lothain - and best remembered as the father of Sir Gawain, nephew of the legendary King Arthur and a Knight of the Round Table.

The birth of her son, Saint Kentigern Garthwys, followed soon after at Culross.

Her son was conceived when Prince Owain mab Urien *son of King Urien of Rheged* raped her.

Owain was disguised as a woman, and after sexually assaulting the naive princess, he confused her by saying, "Weep not, my sister, for I have not known thee as a man is used to know a virgin. Am I not a woman like thyself?"

Upon discovering her pregnancy, her angry father King Loth sentenced her to death and she was hurled from a cliff in Traprain Law.

Miraculously she survived the fall - and was soon met by an unmanned coracle - she had no home to go to, so she got into the small, lightweight boat and, set adrift, it sailed her across the Firth of Forth to land at Culross where she was given shelter and cared for by Saint Serf, the Apostle of Orkney, who became foster-father of her son.

Saint Kentigern (Saint Mungo) *son of Princess & Saint Teneu* was Apostle to the Britons of Strathclyde and founder of the city of Glas Ghu (Glasgow).

Saint Serf (Servanus) (500 - 583) *son of King Eliud of Canaan and Alphia daughter of a king of Arabia* went to Rome, carrying with him such a reputation for sanctity that he was elected pope, and reigned seven years.

He traveled to Gaul after vacating the Holy See, arriving in Scotland. There he met Abbot & Saint St. Adomnán, abbot of Iona.

The Splendid Coel Hêñ (Old King Cole) of Rheged, King of Northern Britain, Dux Britanniorum (c. 370 - 19 11 420) *son of Tegfan Tasciovanus ap Deheuwaint son of Deheuvraint ap Tudwyll son of Telpwyll ap Urban of Britain and Saint Emerita verch Coel* was probably the last Roman Duke of Britain.

He was a leader of Roman or sub-Roman Britain and the progenitor of several kingly lines in the Hêñ Ogled ("the Old North"), the Brythonic-speaking part of north-western England and south-western Scotland.

He married Queen Ystradwel "the Fair" verch Cadvan of Rheged *daughter of King Gadeon ap Conan of Dumnonia and Saint Dareca verch Calpurnius*

King & Saint Cenau of Northern Britain (c. 375 - 470) *son of Coel Hêñ (Old King Cole) and Queen Ystradwel "the Fair" verch Cadvan of Rheged daughter of King Gadeon ap Conan of Dumnonia and Saint Dareca verch Calpurnius* was canonized because he upheld the old Christian ways while under intense pressure from invading pagans.

High King Vortigern's policy of employing Saxon mercenaries to defeat British enemies meant that, for most of his reign, Cenau was obliged to accept the help of the Saxons, Octha and Ebissa, in pushing back invading Picts from his kingdom.

Their interference was widely resented and it was not until after the Kentish Rebellion that they were finally brought under control. Magnaminous in victory, Cenau allowed the Saxons to settle in Deywr (Deira - East Yorkshire).

Upon his death, Cenau's kingdom was divided between his two sons, Gwrgant and Mor.

Gwrgant took the western lands stretching from the Salway to the Mersey, while Mor inherited the central kingdom around the old capital, Ebrauc (York).

King Gorwst Lledwm ("the Ragged") of Rheged *son of Cenau son of Coel Hêñ (Old King Cole)* was born about 430 in southern Rheged - and died in 521 in England.

He married Ewerich Verch de Rheged (Kevenard) (b. 405) - mother of Merichon Gul ap Gorwst Lledwm.

Late 5th century King Merichion Gul ("the Lean") (438 - 535) *son of Gorwst Lledwm son of Cenau son of Coel Hêñ (Old King Cole)* ruled Rheged, including Catterick.

Rheged was a Brythonic realm in the area of sub-Roman known as Hêñ Ogled ("The Old North").

His two sons appeared at the head of two later dynasties: Cynfarch Oer was Urien's father. Another son, Elidyr Lydanwyn ("the Stout and Handsome"), was the ruler of Rheged.

Cynfarch Oer *son of Merichion Gul son of Gorwst Lledwm son of Cenau son of Coel Hêñ (Old King Cole)* was probably a 6th century king of Rheged.

His family was known as the Cyferchyn in his honour. His unflattering epithet *Oer probably means "(the) Unwelcoming"* (literally, "cold").

He may have been a participant in the *Battle of Affdrydd* in 573.

King Urien Rheged of the Hêñ Ogled *son of Cynfarch Oer son of Merichion Gul son of Gorwst Lledwm son of Cenau son of Coel Hêñ (Old King Cole)*

He was the first cousin of the 6th century Brythonic Prince Llywarch Hêñ ("the Old") *son of Chief Elidurus the Dutiful of Argoed son of King Morvidus of the Britons son of King Danius of the Britons and his mistress Tanguesteaia-* one of the four great bards of early Welsh poetry.

iii

King Cedic of Strathclyde died circa 530. His kingdom was divided between his sons: Tutgual, Senylt and Serwan.

Tutgual took the Strathclyde homeland, Senylit *probably* the area around Selkirk and Serwan elsewhere.

In 538, King Comgall of Dálriada abdicated in order to enter a monastery. He was succeeded by his brother, Gabhran.

Former King Comgall of Dálriada died, in 542.

Prince Aedian of Dalriada *possibly* married Princess Royal Domelch of the Picts, about 545.

Saint Ninian, Bishop of Whithorn, Apostle to the Southern Picts, died, about 550.

King Galam Cennaleph of the Picts (552 - 580) was succeeded by Bruide ipe Mailcon, whose father had been king of Gwynedd, in 553.

Saint Kentigern Garthwys founds Glasgow Cathedral, circa 553, adjoining a Christian cemetery established by Saint Ninian; *probably* at the request of King Tutgual Tutclyd of Strathclyde.

King Tutgual Tutclyd of Strathclyde died, about 554. The kingdom was *probably* divided between his sons, Morcant Mwynfawr and Riderch Hael.

Saint Kentigern Garthwys, Bishop of Glasgow, toured his diocese, about 555, and was opposed by King Morcant Mwynfawr of Lesser Strathclyde.

iv

In 558, the eastern settlement of the Dálriadan Scots in Gowrie were *probably* expelled by King Bruide ipe Mailcon of the Picts.

King Gabhran of Dálriada *possibly* died in battle... and was succeeded by his nephew, Conall mac Comgall.

The Scots became subject to Pictish overlordship.

Prince Elidyr of Strathclyde invaded Gwynedd, about 560, in right of his wife [Saint Gwawr verch Brychan daughter of Saint Brychan Gododdin and Prawst verch Tudwal].

He tried to expel his brother-in-law, King Rhun Hir of Gwynedd, at the *Battle of Cadnant Brook*, but was killed in the process.

Due to heightened persecution by King Morcant Mwynfawr of Lessewr Strathclyde, Saint Kentigern Garthwys fled his Glasgow diocese for the safety of South Wales, before moving northwards to Llanelwy (St. Asaphs).

In 562, Saint Mo-Luag founds the monastery of Lismore.

Saint Columba traveled from Ireland to Scotland, in 563. He established a monastery on the Island of Hinba (Jura) and then moved on to Iona.

He was granted the Island by King Conall of Dálriada, but *probably* also sought the permission of King Bruide ipe Mailcon of the Picts to settle on his borders.

Columba founds an Abbey on Iona and became a friendly rival of Saint Mo-Luag.

**TO BE CONTINUED**

# The Legendary Kings of the Picts

## I

**Talorg** was succeeded by **Drest or Drust son of Erp**.

**Drest son of Erp** was a legendary king of the Picts from 412 to 452.  
**Drest I** reigned for 45 years in the time of **Palladius**, who, having been ordained by Pope Celestine, was sent as first bishop to the Irish believing in Christ.

Palladius landed at **Hy-Garchon** (where the town of Wicklow now stands).

He was soon banished by the **king of Leinster**, and returned to North Britain.

*God hindered him... and neither did those fierce and cruel men receive his doctrine readily, nor did he himself wish to spend time in a strange land, but returned to him who sent him.*

Palladius arrived among the Scots in North Britain (in the consulate of Bassus and Antiochus) after he left Ireland in 431.

Scottish church tradition holds that he presided over a Christian community there for about 20 years.

Palladius was accompanied by four companions:

**Sylvester** and **Solinus**, who remained after him in Ireland, and **Augustinus** and **Benedictus**, who followed him to Britain but returned to their own country after his death.

*A cluster of dedications in the Mearns in Scotland, in the village of Auchenblae, are believed to mark his last resting place.*

In all, Drest reigned for 100 years and triumphed in 100 battles.

**Saint Patrick**, the "Apostle of Ireland," came to Ireland in the nineteenth year of his reign, which would place it in the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

He exiled his brother **Nechtan** to Ireland.

In 438, six years after Patrick left for Ireland, **St. Germanus** sent **Auxilius** and **Iserninus** to assist him.

In 439, bishops **Secundinus**, his brother Auxilius and Iserninus arrived in Ireland.

**Saint Secundinus** (fl. 5th century), or **Sechnall**, was founder and patron saint of Domnach Sechnaill, now Dunshaughlin (Co. Meath),

who was a disciple of St. Patrick and one of the first bishops of Armagh - and became known as the first Christian bishop to die on Irish soil.<sup>230</sup>

**Saint Auxilius**, or *Usaille* (d. ca. 459), a brother of Seachnaill nephew of St. Patrick - being son of Patrick's sister, **Dar Ercae**, and her husband, **Restitutus**, a Lombard,

who may have been ordained a deacon at Auxerre with Patrick and Iserninus.

He was one of nine brothers, eight of whom became bishops in Ireland.

His early life and training are obscure, but he appears to have studied in Gaul at the school of **St. Germanus**.<sup>231</sup>

*In 438, six years after Patrick left for Ireland, Germanus sent Auxilius and Iserninus to assist him.*

## II

### Saint Darerca

Saint Darerca<sup>232</sup> was the "mother of saints" [ ] most of her children (seventeen sons and two daughters) entered religious life,

<sup>230</sup> Secundinus is said to have died in 447 or 448, aged 75.

<sup>231</sup> **Germanus of Auxerre** (Welsh: *Garmen Sant*) (c. 378 – c. 448) was a bishop of Auxerre in Late Antique Gaul. He is best remembered for his journey to combat **Pelagianism** in Britain in or around 429 A.D. He also played an important part in the invention and promotion of the *Cult of Saint Alban*, who was unknown before the saint revealed himself to Germanus in a dream or holy vision. Germanus is venerated as a saint in both the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, which commemorate him on July 31<sup>st</sup>.

<sup>232</sup> Saint Darerca is honoured on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, and is patroness of Valentia Island.

many were later recognized as saints, and several of her sons became bishops.

Her first husband was **Restitutus the Lombard**, after whose death she married **Chonas the Briton**. By Restitutus she was mother of Saint Sechnall of Dunshaughlin; Saint Nectan of Killunche, and of Fennor (near Slane); of Saint Auxilius of Killossey (near Naas, County Kildare); of Saint Diarmaid of Druim-corcortri (near Navan); of Dabonna, Mogoron, Drioc, Luguat, and Coemed Maccu Baird (the Lombard) of Cloonshaneville, near Frenchpark, County Roscommon.

Darerca was at least twice married more:

She was the second wife of **Conan Meriadoc** and the mother of his eldest son, **Gradlon Mawr** who became Gradlon the Great, King of Brittany.

Darerca's second husband, **Chonas the Briton**, founded the church of Both-chonais, now Binnion, Parish of Clonmany, in the barony of Inishowen, County Donegal.

She had children by both husbands, some say seventeen sons, all but one of whom became bishops - at least one became King of Brittany, rather than serve the church as a Bishop.

There were four sons of Dar Ercae by Chonas, namely four bishops, **Saint Mel** or **Moel** of Ardagh,<sup>233</sup> Saint Rioc of Inisboffin, Saint Muinis of Forgney, County Longford, and Saint Maelchu.

Mel and his brothers Melchu,<sup>234</sup> Munis and Rioch accompanied their uncle Patrick to Ireland and helped him with his missionary work there.

Mel and his brother Melchu were both consecrated bishop by Patrick himself.

After St Patrick built the church at Ardagh, he appointed Mel as Bishop of Ardagh.

Mel was a traveling missionary and evangelist.

Acting upon the apostolic precept, Mel supported himself by working with his hands; what he gained beyond bare necessities, he gave to the poor.

Mel lived with his aunt, **Lupait**, on her farm during a portion of his ministry, and rumor spread that their relationship was of a scandalous nature.

St. Patrick went to investigate.

Mel and Lupait both produced miracles to testify to their innocence: Mel plowed up a live fish in the middle of his field, and Lupait carried hot coals without being burned.

Dar Ercae had two daughters: **Saint Eiche** of Kilglass and **Saint Lalloc** of Senlis.

Four other sons are assigned her, namely: **Saint Crummin** of Lecua, **Saint Miduu**, **Saint Carantoc**,<sup>235</sup> and **Saint Maceith**.<sup>236</sup>

<sup>233</sup> St. Mel's feast day, February 7<sup>th</sup>, has begun to be observed as a holiday for single people. "St. Mel's Day" is a chance for singles to celebrate the good things about being single. Traditions include sending yourself a St. Mel's Day card and for people to host parties for their single friends.

<sup>234</sup> There is a lot of confusing and conflicting evidence about the life of St. Mel, including the possibility that he and Melchu were the same person. Mel has a strong cultus in County Longford where he was the first abbot-bishop of a richly endowed monastery that flourished for centuries. The cathedral at Longford is dedicated to Mel, as is a college. A crozier, believed to have belonged to Saint Mel, was found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century at Ardagh near the old church of St Mel. The crozier is now kept in a darkened bronze reliquary that was once decorated with gilt and colored stones which was burned in the 2009 fire that destroyed the cathedral. He is the patron saint of the Roman Catholic diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois.

<sup>235</sup> **Saint Carantoc** (Welsh: *Carannog*; Irish: *Cairnech*; Breton: *Karanteg*; Latin: *Carantoc*), also anglicized as **Carantock** and by other spellings, was a 6<sup>th</sup> century abbot, confessor, and saint in Wales and the West

## Saint Germanus of Auxerre

**Germanus of Auxerre** son of *Rusticus* and *Germanilla* - one of the noblest families in Gaul in the latter portion of the fourth century - received the very best education provided by the distinguished schools of Arles and Lyons, and then went to Rome, where he studied eloquence and civil law. He practiced there before the tribunal of the prefect for some years with great success. His high birth and brilliant talents brought him into contact with the court, and he married **Eustachia**, a lady highly esteemed in imperial circles. The emperor sent him back to Gaul, appointing him one of the six dukes, entrusted with the government of the Gallic provinces. He resided at Auxerre.

At length he incurred the displeasure of the bishop, **Saint Amator** by hanging hunting trophies on a certain tree, which in earlier times had been the scene of pagan worship. Amator remonstrated with him in vain. One day when the duke was absent, the bishop had the tree cut down and the trophies burnt. Fearing the anger of the duke, who wished to kill him, he fled and appealed to the prefect **Julius** for permission to confer the tonsure on Germain. This being granted, Amator, who felt that his own life was drawing to a close, returned. When the duke came to the church, Amator caused the doors to be barred and gave him the tonsure against his will, telling him to live as one destined to be his successor, and forthwith made him a deacon.

When in a short time Amator died, Germain was unanimously chosen to fill the vacant see, being consecrated 7 July 418. His education now served him in good stead in the government of the diocese, which he administered with great sagacity. He distributed his goods among the poor, practiced great austerities, and built a large monastery dedicated to **Saints Cosmas and Damian** on the banks of the Yonne, whether he was wont to retire in his spare moments.

Germanus is best remembered for his journey to combat **Pelagianism**<sup>237</sup> in Britain in or around 429 A.D., shortly after the Romans had withdrawn from Britain.

Country. He is credited with founding Llangrannog, Ceredigion, Wales and St Carantoc's Church, Crantock. His name is listed amongst the Cornish Saints. Carantoc's is one of five insular saints' lives and two Breton ones that mention Arthur in contexts that may be independent of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*.

Ceredigion is given as his birthplace, *sua proprio regio*. He was the son of Corwn, grandson of **Ceredig, King of Ceredigion**. To escape being elected king, he fled to Llangrannog. The shavings he produced for lighting a fire there were carried away as soon as they were made by a dove: where the bird alighted, Carantoc built the present church.

He probably moved to Cornwall before preaching for some time in Ireland, around Dulane in County Meath and Inis-Baithen in Leinster. It is also sometimes said that he spent time in Brittany where there is a town also named Carantec: stories set in Brittany replicate those from Britain.

Carantoc's place of death and burial is disputed between Inis Baithen and Dulane. His feast day is May 16<sup>th</sup>.

In the most famous incident of Carantoc's life, the saint, having returned to Wales, crossed the Bristol Channel, looking for his *portable altar*. He arrived on the banks of the **River Willett** and came into conflict with both King **Cado** of Dumnonia and King **Arthur** at Dunster in Somerset.

Carantoc was eventually obliged to defeat a *ferocious dragon* in order to retrieve his altar and, in return, was given land at nearby Carhampton to found a monastery.

<sup>236</sup> The latter is identical with **Liamania**, according to Colgan, but must not be confounded with Saint Monennia, or Darerca, whose feast is on July 6<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>237</sup> **Pelagianism** is the belief that **original sin** did not taint human nature and that **mortal will** is still capable of choosing good or evil without special Divine aid. This theological theory is named after the British monk **Pelagius Brettos** (354–420 or 440), although he denied, at least at some point in his life, many of the doctrines associated with his name. Pelagius

A Gaulish assembly of bishops chose Germanus and **Saint Lupus, Bishop of Troyes**<sup>238</sup> (c. 383 – c. 478), to visit the island.

**Lupus and Attila**

Lupus was credited with saving Troyes from the Huns under Attila, in 451.

After praying for many days, Lupus, dressed in full episcopal regalia, went to meet Attila at the head of a procession of the clergy. Attila was allegedly so impressed with Lupus that he spared the city. Attila went on to lose the **Battle of Châlons**.

Lupus ran into trouble when Attila asked the bishop to accompany him and his army after Châlons. Attila believed that Lupus' presence would spare his army from extermination. However, Lupus was accused by the Romans of helping the Huns escape. Lupus was forced to leave Troyes, and he became a hermit in the mountains.

It was alleged that Pelagianism was rife among the British clergy, led by a British bishop's son named **Agricola**.

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taught that the human will, as created with its abilities by God, was sufficient to live a **sinless life**, although he believed that God's grace assisted every good work. Pelagianism has come to be identified with the view, (whether Pelagius agreed or not), that human beings can earn salvation by their own efforts.

The teachings of Pelagius are generally associated with the rejection of original sin and of the practice of **infant baptism**. Although the writings of Pelagius are no longer extant, the eight canons of the **Council of Carthage** provided corrections to the perceived errors of the early Pelagians. These corrections include:

Death did not come to Adam from a physical necessity, but through sin. New-born children must be baptized on account of original sin. Justifying grace not only avails for the forgiveness of past sins, but also gives assistance for the avoidance of future sins. The grace of Christ not only discloses the knowledge of God's commandments, but also imparts strength to will and execute them. Without God's grace it is not merely more difficult, but absolutely impossible to perform good works. Not out of humility, but in truth must we confess ourselves to be sinners. The saints refer the petition of the Our Father, "Forgive us our trespasses," not only to others, but also to themselves. The saints pronounce the same supplication not from mere humility, but from truthfulness

Pelagius was disturbed by the immorality he encountered in Rome and saw Christians using human frailty as an excuse for their failure to live a Christian life. He taught that the **human will**, as created with its abilities by God, was sufficient to live a **sinless life**, although he believed that God's grace assisted every good work. Pelagius did not believe that all humanity was guilty in Adam's sin, but said that Adam had condemned mankind through bad example. The value of Christ's redemption was, in his opinion, limited mainly to instruction and example.

The theology of **Mormonism** is completely Pelagian. Mormon theology teaches that the **Atonement of Jesus Christ** has overcome the effects of "original sin" for all mankind. It also teaches: "there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah." Pelagianism is not the official stance of The **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**.

<sup>238</sup> Born at Toul, he was brother-in-law to **Hilary of Arles**, as he had married one of Hilary's sisters, **Pimeniola**. Lupus worked as a lawyer. However, after being married for six years, he and his wife parted by mutual agreement. Lupus renounced all of his wealth and entered **Lérins Abbey**, a community led by **Saint Honoratus**. Around 426, Lupus was named bishop of Troyes. Lupus was reluctant to assume this office: a story told of him was when he traveled to Mâcon in order to dispose of an estate, he was met by deputies of the diocese of Troyes with the news of the death of **Ursus, bishop of Troyes**, and his own selection to the see. Lupus refused to take this office but eventually relented.

He has also been called the brother of **Saint Vincent of Lérins**, a Gallic author of early Christian writings. **Semipelagianism** was a doctrine of grace advocated by monks in and around Marseilles in Southern Gaul after 428. It aimed at a compromise between the two extremes of Pelagianism and **Augustinism**, and was condemned as heresy at the **Second Council of Orange** in 529 after more than a century of disputes.

Germanus went to combat the threat and satisfy the Pope that the British church would not break away from the *Augustinian teachings of divine grace*.

### ii

On the way to Britain they passed through Nanterre, where Germanus noticed in the crowd which met them a young girl, whom he bade live as one espoused to Christ, and who later became **Saint Geneviève of Paris** (c. 419/422 – 502/512) - the patron saint of Paris in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions.

She was born in Nanterre and moved to Paris after encountering Germanus of Auxerre and Lupus of Troyes and dedicated herself to a Christian life.

Germanus and Lupus confronted the British clergy at a public meeting before a huge crowd in Britain. The Pelagians were described as being 'conspicuous for riches, brilliant in dress and surrounded by a fawning multitude.' The bishops debated and, despite having no popular support, Germanus was able to defeat the Pelagians using his *superior rhetorical skills*.

Germanus led the native Britons to a victory against Pictish and Saxon raiders... The enemy approaching, the former general put himself at the head of the Christians. He led them into a vale between two high mountains, and ordered his troops shout when he gave them a sign. When the Saxon pirates came near them, he cried out thrice, Alleluia, which was followed by the whole army of Britons. The sound echoed from the hills with a noise so loud that the barbarians, judging from the shout that they were facing a mighty army, flung down their arms and ran away, leaving behind their baggage and booty

### Germanus and the Cult of Saint Alban

The cult of Saint Alban had been established before Germanus' visit to Britain. Germanus claimed that Saint Alban came to him in a dream, revealing his identity and the details of his martyrdom. When Germanus awoke, he had the account written down in *tituli*,<sup>239</sup> possibly to be engraved on the walls or illustrated placards at a church site in Auxerre.<sup>240</sup>

### iii

Germanus may have made a second visit to Britain in the mid 430s or mid 440s, joined by **Severus, Bishop of Trier** and met **Elafius**, described by Bede as 'a chief of that region.' Germanus is said to have cured Elafius' enfeebled son by *a miracle* that served to persuade the population that Gaulish Catholicism rather than *Pelagianism was the true faith*.

Germanus is said to have condemned for incest and other crimes **Guorthigern**, identified with the Vortigern of Welsh tradition. Vortigern ordered his daughter to bring her child to Germanus and name the bishop as its father. The scheme having failed, Vortigern was cursed by Germanus and the council of Britons, and fled into Wales followed by Germanus and the clergy.

<sup>239</sup> **Titulus** (Latin "inscription" or "label", the plural *tituli* is also used in English) is a term used for the labels or captions naming figures or subjects in art, which were commonly added in classical and medieval art, and remain conventional in Eastern Orthodox icons.

<sup>240</sup> Historians believe that this account formed the basis of the **Passio Albani**, or **Passion of Saint Alban**, the foundational medieval hagiographic text about the martyrdom of Saint Alban, the protomartyr of Roman Britain. The author is anonymous, but it is thought to have been originally authored or commissioned by **Germanus of Auxerre**, probably sometime during the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century. It currently survives in three different recensions and six separate manuscripts located throughout Europe, and forms the basis for all subsequent retellings of the Saint Alban martyrdom, from Gildas to Bede.

They pursued him to a castle on the river Teifi, where they fasted and prayed for three days and three nights. Finally, *fire fell from heaven consuming the castle, the guilty king, and his company*.

He died<sup>241</sup> in Ravenna while petitioning the Roman government for leniency for the citizens of Armorica, against whom **Aëtius** had dispatched the Alans on a punitive expedition. Germanus had famously confronted **Goar**, the king of the Alans...

### IV

When Saint Patrick visited Bredach, he ordained **Aengus mac Ailill**, the local chieftain of Moville, now a seaside resort for the citizens of Derry.

While there he found "the three deacons," his sister's sons, namely, Saint Reat, Saint Nenn, and Saint Aedh.<sup>242</sup>

Iserminus and Auxilius were Celts [ ] either from Armorica, Cornwall, or Wales.

### V

**Talorc son of Aniel** was a king of the Picts from 452 to 456.

He reigned for two-to-four years between Drest son of Erp and his brother Nechtan.

**Nechtan Morbet son of Erp** was a king of the Picts from 456 to 480.

**Nechtan Celchamoth** is said to have reigned for twenty-four years.

**Nectonius Magnus Wirp's son**, the king of all the provinces of the Picts, offered to **Saint Brigid**, to the day of judgment, Abernethy, with its territories...

Nectonius, living in a life of exile, when his brother Drest expelled him to Ireland, begged Saint Brigid to beseech God for him.

And she prayed for him, and said: "If thou reach thy country, the Lord will have pity on thee.

Thou shalt possess in peace the kingdom of the Picts.

Nothing else can be said of Nechtan with any certainty.

**Drest Gurthinnnoch** was a "great" king of the Picts from 480 to 510. He reigned 30 years between Nechtan and Galan.

**Galan Erilich** was a king of the Picts from 510 to 522.

He reigned for fifteen years between Drest Gurthinnnoch and the joint rule of **Drest son of Udrost** and **Drest son of Girom**.

**Drest son of Girom** was a king of the Picts from 522 to 531.

He is associated with **Drest III son of Udrost** or **son of Uudrossig** was a king of the Picts from 522 to 530.

Drest III is associated with **Drest IV**.

Various reigns, separately and jointly, are assigned to the two Drests, varying from one to fifteen years.

After the joint rule, Drest IV reigned four-to-five years.

Drest is the first of three possible brothers, all called son of Girom, the other being his successors Gartnait I and Cailtriam.

**Gartnait I son of Girom** was a king of the Picts from 531 to 537 - ruling for six-or-seven years between Drest IV and Cailtriam.

**Cailtriam**<sup>243</sup> *son of Girom* was a king of the Picts from 537 to 538. He ruled for one or six years between his brother Gartnait *son of Girom* and Talorc *son of Muircholach*.

He is the third son of Girom listed as king, although Drest *son of Girom* is not explicitly stated to have been a brother of Cailtriam and Gartnait.

<sup>241</sup> Based on the scanty evidence, some scholars have argued that his death should be dated to 445, 446, 447 or 448, and others that it should be dated to c. 437.

<sup>242</sup> Saint Reat, Saint Nenn, and Saint Aedh are commemorated respectively on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, April 25<sup>th</sup>, and August 31<sup>st</sup>.

<sup>243</sup> No two lists which give a possibly authentic version of his name agree on its form, variants including Cailtarni and Cailtaine. Later versions include Kelhiran, Kelturan and Kyburcan.

**Talorc II** son of Muircholach<sup>244</sup> was a king of the Picts from 538 to 549.

He reigned for eleven years between Cailtram and Drest V.

**Drest V** son of Munait was a king of the Picts from 549 to 550. He reigned for one year between Talorc II and Galam Cennalath. He reigned until 580.

**Galam Cennalath** (died 580)<sup>245</sup> was a king of the Picts from 550 to 555.

He reigned for between two-and-four years, with one year being jointly with **Bridei** son of Maelchon - alternatively he may have had two reigns.

**Bridei** son of Maelchon was king of the Picts from 554 to 584. Bridei is remembered for the migratory flight of the Scots before Máelchú's son (i.e. king Bruide) - associated with the death of Gabrán mac Domangairt.

**Gabráin mac Domangairt** (Old Welsh: *Gawran map Dinwarch*) the Traitor son of Domangart Réti was king of Dál Riata in the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century.

He is the eponymous ancestor of the Cenél nGabráin.

## VI

### The Legendary kings of Dál Riata

#### Part One

**Loarn mac Eirc** son of Erc son of Eochaid Muinremuir was a legendary king of Dál Riata who may have lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. He was king of Alba - and eponymous ancestor of Cenél Loairn.<sup>246</sup>

Loarn mac Erca spent time with Loarn, his uncle, before **murdering him by setting him aflame**.

**Fergus Mór mac Eirc** [son of Erc] son of Eochaid Muinremuir,<sup>247</sup> also known as **Mac Nisse Mór**, held part of Britain with the people of Dál Riata - and he died there.

Fergus was allowed to settle in Scotland as a federate of Arthur, as a bulwark against the Picts.

He was the first Scot to rule in Scotland - and Cináed mac Ailpin was his descendant.

Fergus brought the **Stone of Scone** with him from Ireland and was succeeded by a son named Dúngal.

The Scots had been expelled from Scotland when the Romans under one Maximus conquered all of Britain.

His father Eugenius had been killed by the Romans, and **Fergusius II** was raised in exile in Scandinavia.

He later fought with the Franks, before eventually returning to Scotland and reconquering the Scottish lands.

<sup>244</sup> There are many variants of his father's name, including Mordeleg, Murtholoic and Mordeleth.

<sup>245</sup> The death of "Cennalath, King of the Picts" is reported by the *Annals of Ulster* and the *Annals of Tigernach* for 580.

<sup>246</sup> The **Cenél Loairn** controlled parts of northern Argyll around the Firth of Lorne, most probably centered in Lorne but perhaps including the islands of Mull and Colonsay, Morvern and Ardnamurchan. The boundary to the east was the Druim Alban mountain ridge that separated Dál Riata from Pictland. The chief places of the kingdom appears to have been at **Dun Ollaigh**, near Oban and Dunadd near Crinan. The chief religious site may have been on Lismore, later the seat of the High Medieval bishop of Argyll.

Several kings of Dál Riata were members of the Cenél Loairn, and thus claimed descent from Loarn: Ferchar Fota, Ainbcellach mac Ferchair, Selbach mac Ferchair, Dúngal mac Selbaig, and Muiredach mac Ainbcellaig.

Furthermore, in High Medieval times the **Mormaers of Moray** claimed descent from Loarn: Findláech mac Ruaidrí, Máel Coluim mac Máil Bríti, Gille Coemgáin mac Máil Bríti, Mac Bethad mac Findláech (also king of Alba), Lulach mac Gille Coemgáin (also king of Alba), Máel Snechtai mac Lulaich, and Óengus.

<sup>247</sup> [Fergus] m. h-Eirc m. Echdach Muinremuir m. Óengusa Fir m. Feideilmid m. Óengusa m. Feideilmid m. Cormaic, and a further forty-six generations here omitted.

He was killed in battle against **Durstus, king of the Picts**,<sup>248</sup> and was succeeded by his son Eugenius

The first kings of Dál Riata whose existences are reasonably sure are Fergus's grandsons Gabrán mac Domangairt and Comgall, or perhaps his great-grandson Áedán mac Gabráin.

**Domangart Réti** was king of Dál Riata in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century, following the death of his father, Fergus Mór.

He had at least two sons: Comgall and Gabrán... both of whom became kings in succession.

He was present at the death of Saint Patrick , c. 17 March 493 Domangart died around 507 and was succeeded by Comgall.

**Comgall mac Domangairt** son of Domangart Réti son of Fergus Mór was king of Dál Riata in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century.

He was the eponymous founder of the **Cenél Comgaill** - one of the kindreds of Dál Riata named by the *Senchus fer n-Alban*.

Comgall had one son, Conall, and that Conall had seven sons, although six are named, Loingseach, Nechtan, Artan, Tuatan, Tútio, and Coirpre.

It may be that Coirpre was a later addition as the Senchus speaks of the people of Coirpre as being distinct from the sons of Erc.

However, the kindred may have been important in the Gaelicisation of the Picts, as a certain **Dargart mac Finguine** of the Cenél Comgaill married the Pictish princess **Der-Ilei**, and the Pictish kings Bridei and Nechtan mac Der Ilei were the result of this marriage.

## VII

**Gabráin the Traitor** (*Gwran Wradouc*) presumed ancestor of the Cenél nGabráin.<sup>249</sup>

Kings of Alba and of Scotland traced their descent through Gabrán to his grandfather **Fergus Mór**, who was seen as the ultimate founder of the royal house as late as the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries... long after the Gaelic origins of the kingdom.

Unlike the Cenél Loairn, the **Senchus Fer n-Alban** does not list any kindreds within the Cenél nGabráin.

However, probable descendants of Gabrán, such as **Dúnchad mac Conaing** and his many kinsmen, would appear to have disputed the succession with the descendants of **Eochaid Buide** grandson of Gabrán, so that this absence of explicit segments in the kindred may be misleading

Note the following divisions:

- after **Áedán mac Gabráin**, between the main line, called "the sons of Eochaid Buide" and "the children of Cináed mac Ailpín" - and the "sons of Conaing";
- after **Eochaid Buide**, between the main line and the "children of Fergus Goll" and the "children of Connad Cerr... or the men of Fife," although modern studies make Connad Cerr a member of the Cenél Comgaill;
- after **Eochaid mac Domangairt**, between the main line and the Cenél Comgaill.

Kilmartin may have been an important early Christian site by reason of its proximity to Dunadd and its dedication to Saint Martin of Tours, as may Kilmichael Glassary.

However, there appears to be no religious site of the importance of Lismore in the lands of the rival Cenél Loairn.

## VIII

**Bridei son of Maelchon**, was king of the Picts from 554 to 584.

<sup>248</sup> Drest V son of Munait (549-550).

<sup>249</sup> The domain of the **Cenél nGabráin** appears to have been centered in Kintyre and Knapdale and may have included Arran, Jura and Gigha. The title **king of Kintyre** is used of a number of presumed kings of the Cenél nGabráin. Two probable royal sites are known, **Dunadd**, which lies at the northern edge of their presumed lands, and **Aberte** (or Dún Aberte), which is very likely the later Dunaverty on the headland beside Southend, Kintyre.

Accounts of Bridei are problematic in that "it" fails to tell us whether Bridei was already a Christian, and if not, whether Columba converted him.

There was a monastic community perhaps as early as the late 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Bridei was not the only king in Pictland.

The death of Galam — called "Cennalath, king of the Picts" — is recorded in 580 by the *Annals of Ulster*, four years before Bridei's death

In addition, the presence of the "under-king of Orkney" is mentioned at Bridei's court.

Two expeditions to Orkney during Bridei's reign, or, as seems equally probable, one expedition twice, in 580 and 581, is also noted.

The chief place of Bridei's kingdom, which may have corresponded with later Fortriu,<sup>250</sup> is not known.

After leaving the royal court, by implication soon afterwards, Columba came to the River Ness, and that "the court" was atop a steep rock.

Accordingly, it is generally supposed that Bridei's chief residence was at *Craig Phadrig, to the west of modern Inverness overlooking the Beauly Firth*.

Bridei's death is reported in the 580s, perhaps in battle against Pictish rivals in Circinn, an area thought to correspond with the Mearns.

Bridei son of Maelgwn Gwynedd,<sup>251</sup> the mighty king of north Wales was followed by Gartnait son of Domelch.

## IX

### Cunedda

Cunedda ap Edern or Cunedda Wledig (fl. 5<sup>th</sup> century) was an important early Welsh leader, and the progenitor of the royal dynasty of Gwynedd.

The name *Cunedda* (spelled *Cunedag* in the 9<sup>th</sup> century) derives from the Brythonic word *Cunodagos*, meaning good hound.

His genealogy is traced back to a grandfather named **Padarn Beisrudd**, which literally translates as Paternus of the "red tunic"/"scarlet robe"<sup>252</sup> ap Tegid (son of Tegid).

His father may have borne the Romano-Brythonic name of *Tacitus (Tegid)*.

Padarn is believed to have been born in the late-4<sup>th</sup>-or-early-5<sup>th</sup> century in the *Old North* (or Hen Ogledd) of Roman Britain: A frontier chieftain who was granted official Roman military rank of reasonably high rank, a practice attested elsewhere along the empire's borders at the time, who had been placed in command of *Votadini* troops - a Celtic people of the Iron Age in Great Britain - stationed in Clackmannanshire in the 380s or earlier by the Emperor Magnus Maximus.

His command in part of what is now Scotland probably lasted till his death and was then assumed by his son Edern.

Edern was the father of Cunedda, founder of the Kingdom of Gwynedd.

In all likelihood, Padarn's command in Scotland was assumed after his death by his son, Edern (Latin: *Aeternus*), and then passed to Edern's son, Cunedda.

<sup>250</sup> **Fortriu** or the **Kingdom of Fortriu** is the name given by historians for a Pictish kingdom recorded between the 4<sup>th</sup>-and-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, and often used synonymously with Pictland in general. While traditionally located in and around Strathearn in central Scotland, it is more likely to have been located in and around Moray and Easter Ross in the north.

<sup>251</sup> **Maelgwn Gwynedd** (Latin: *Maglocunus*; died c. 547) was king of Gwynedd during the early 6<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>252</sup> The coat of Padarn Redcoat is one of the Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain, where it is said to fit perfectly any brave man, but will not fit cowards.

**Maelgwn**, the great king, was reigning among the Britons in the region of Gwynedd, for his ancestor, Cunedag, with his sons, whose number was eight, had come previously from the northern part, that is from the region which is called Manaw Gododdin, one hundred and forty-six years before Maelgwn reigned. And with great slaughter they drove out from those regions the Scotti who never returned again to inhabit them

Cunedda and his forebears led the Votadini against Pictish and Irish incursions south of **Hadrian's Wall**.<sup>253</sup>

Sometime after this, the Votadini troops under Cunedda relocated to North Wales to defend the region from Irish invasion, specifically the **Uí Liatháin**.<sup>254</sup>

Cunedda established himself in Wales, in the territory of the **Venedoti**, which would become the centre of the **kingdom of Gwynedd**.

He was acting under the orders of Maximus (or Maximus's successors) or **Vortigern**, the high king of the British in the immediate post-Roman era.

Cunedda was operating under instructions from Rome, given that the political state of sub-Roman Britain would probably have made it impossible to exercise such centralized control by the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

As Maximus himself was dead by the end of 388, and **Constantine III** departed from Britain with the last of Rome's military forces in 407, less than a generation later, it is doubtful that Rome had much direct influence over the military actions of the Votadini, either through Maximus or any other emissary, for any significant length of time.

Maximus (or his successors) may have handed over control of the British frontiers to local chieftains at an earlier date.

It may have been **Vortigern** who, adopting elements of Roman statecraft, moved the Votadini south, just as he invited Saxon settlers to protect other parts of the island. According to this version of events, Vortigern would have instructed Cunedda and his Votadini subjects to move to Wales in response to the aforementioned Irish incursions no later than the year 442, when Vortigern's former Saxon allies rebelled against his rule.

Cunedda's supposed grandson **Maelgwn Gwynedd** was a contemporary of the 6<sup>th</sup> century British monk **Gildas** (c. 500–570) (also known as "Gildas the Wise" or *Gildas Sapiens*).

Probably celebrated for his strength, courage, and ability to rally the beleaguered Romano-British forces of the region, he eventually secured a politically advantageous marriage to Gwawl, daughter of **Coel Hêr**, the Romano-British ruler of Eboracum (modern York), and is claimed to have had nine sons.

The early kingdoms of **Ceredigion** and **Meirionnydd** were supposedly named after his two sons **Ceredig ap Cunedda** (died 453), king of Ceredigion, and **Meirion**.

<sup>253</sup> **Hadrian's Wall** (Latin: *Vallum Aelium*), also called the Roman Wall, Picts' Wall, or *Vallum Hadriani* in Latin, was a defensive fortification in the Roman province of Britannia, begun in 122 A.D. in the reign of the emperor Hadrian. It ran from the banks of the River Tyne near the North Sea to the Solway Firth on the Irish Sea, and was the northern limit of the Roman Empire.

It had a stone base and a stone wall. There were milecastles with two turrets in between. There was a fort about every five Roman miles. From north to south, the wall comprised a ditch, wall, military way and vallum, another ditch with adjoining mounds. It is thought that the milecastles were staffed with static garrisons, whereas the forts had fighting garrisons of infantry and cavalry. In addition to the wall's defensive military role, its gates may have been used as customs posts.

<sup>254</sup> The **Uí Liatháin** were an early kingdom of Munster in southern Ireland. They belonged to the same kindred as the **Uí Fidgenti**, and the two are considered together in the earliest sources.

The hill of **Allt Cunedda**<sup>255</sup> close to Cydweli in Carmarthenshire is probably associated with Cunedda and suggests his campaigns against the Irish extended from Gwynedd into to south west Wales.

The sons of Cunedda son of Eternus son of Paternus (*Padarn Beisrudd, of the red robe*) son of Tacitus (*Tegid*) were: Osmail, Rumanus, Dunautus, Eternus, Ceretic, Abloyc, Enniaun Girt (*Einion Yrth*), Docmail, and Typiaun.

ii

**Einion ap Cunedda** (c. 420-500), also known as **Einion Yrth** (Welsh for "the Impetuous"), was a king of Gwynedd. One of the sons of Cunedda, he traveled with his father to north Wales in the early 450s to expel Irish raiders from the region.

After his father's death, Einion inherited control over the newly-founded kingdom of Gwynedd. Aided by his brother Ceredig, ruler of Ceredigion, and his nephew Meirion, ruler of Meirionnydd, Einion built upon his father's successes and further established his family's rule in the region. He was succeeded by two sons: Cadwallon Lawhir and Owain Ddantgwyn.

**Cadwallon ap Einion** (c. 460-534; reigned from c. 500), usually known as **Cadwallon Lawhir** ('Long Hand')<sup>256</sup> and also called **Cadwallon I**, was a king of Gwynedd. Cadwallon ruled during, or shortly after, the **Battle of Mons Badonicus**,<sup>257</sup> and King Arthur's victory over the Saxons (in either the early 490s or the mid 510s).

Cadwallon's name is not connected with the legendary battle, but he may have benefited from the period of relative peace and prosperity throughout Britain that it procured. The most momentous military achievement of Cadwallon's reign was the final expulsion of Irish settlers on Anglesey, and the re-absorption of that island, which later became the cultural and political base of the kingdom, into Gwynedd.

Cadwallon's son, Maelgwn Gwynedd, murdered his uncle to ascend to the throne, which suggests that someone other than Maelgwn himself inherited the kingdom upon Cadwallon's death. No clear evidence exists as to who this "lost king" might be, but it might be Owain Ddantgwyn.

iii

**Aurelius Conanus** or **Aurelius Caninus** was a Brittonic king in 6<sup>th</sup> century sub-Roman Britain - a tyrant - and a legendary King of Britain. Aurelius Conanus reproved five kings for their various sins: All the kings are compared to Biblical beasts.

<sup>255</sup> Amateur excavations of this site in the 19<sup>th</sup> century revealed an **Iron Age hill fort** and several collapsed stone cists containing the buried but well preserved **skeletons of several men** with formidable physical proportions. At least one of these was found in the seated position and another buried beneath a massive stone "shield" who had apparently been killed by a head wound. The bones appear to have been sent to various museums and have all since been woefully lost.

<sup>256</sup> Cadwallon's epithet, *Lawhir*, may possibly refer to him having longer than usual arms or might also be a metaphor, referring to the extent of his authority. The late medieval poet **Iolo Goch** (c. 1320 – c. 1398) son of *Ithel Goch ap Cynwrig ap Iorwerth Ddu ap Cynwrig Ddewis Herod ap Cywryd* claims that he could "reach a stone from the ground to kill a raven, without bending his back, because his arm was as long as his side to the ground."

<sup>257</sup> The **Battle of Badon** (Latin: *Bellum in monte Badonis* or *Mons Badonicus*, Welsh: *Cad Mynydd Baddon*, all literally meaning "Battle of Mount Badon" or "Battle of Badon Hill") was a battle thought to have occurred between Britons and an Anglo-Saxons in the late-5<sup>th</sup> or early-6<sup>th</sup> century. It was credited as a major victory for the Britons, stopping the encroachment of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms for a period. It is chiefly known today for the supposed involvement of King Arthur.

Aurelius, called the "lion's whelp," is castigated for his "horrible murders, fornications, and adulteries," and beseeched to repent his sins before he ends up like the rest of his family, who have already died pursuing similar ends.

Aurelius Conanus the nephew to the previous king Constantine, whom he kills after a reign of only three years. The kingship should go to another, unnamed uncle of Aurelius,' but Aurelius pursues a civil war, ultimately imprisoning his kinsman and killing his sons. However, Aurelius only rules for two years before he himself dies - and is succeeded by Vortiporius - *supra*.

• •

**Vortiporius or Vortipor** (Old Welsh: *Guortepir*, Welsh: *Gwrdeber*, sometimes misspelled as *Gwerthefyr*) (Latin, *Votepororis*; rendered *Votegorigas* in Ogham), was a king of Dyfed in the early-to-mid-6<sup>th</sup> century.

He was the successor of Aurelius Conanus and was succeeded by Malgo. He was grey with age - his wife had died - and he had at least one daughter.

He was a descendant of Eochaid Allmuir (English: Eochaid the Foreigner [literally *(from) Overseas*]), who is said to have led a sept of the Déisi in their settlement of Dyfed c. 270, though this date is considered to be too early for the arrival of the Déisi in Wales.

"Uortiporius, being declared king, conquers the Saxons"

Uortiporius succeeded Aurelius Conan, and after he was declared king, the Saxons rose against him and brought over their countrymen from Germany in a great fleet, but that these were defeated. Uortiporius then ruled peacefully for four years, being succeeded by "Malgo" (Maelgwn Gwynedd).

iv

**Maelgwn Gwynedd** (Latin: *Maglocunus*; died c. 547) son of Cadwallon Lawhir and great-grandson of Cunedda, also known as "Malgo, king of the Venedotians," a usurper and reprobate addicted to [homosexual] **sodomy**, was king of Gwynedd during the early-6<sup>th</sup> century - the fourth king of Britain after Arthur.

Surviving records suggest he held a pre-eminent position among the Brythonic kings in Wales and their allies in the "Old North" along the Scottish coast.

Maelgwn was a generous supporter of Christianity, funding the foundation of churches throughout Wales and even far beyond the bounds of his own kingdom.

After the collapse of Roman authority in Britain, north Wales was invaded and colonized by Gaelic tribes from Ireland.

The **kingdom of Gwynedd** began with the reconquest of the coast by northern Britons under the command of Maelgwn's great-grandfather **Cunedda Wledig**.

Generations later, Maelgwn's father **Cadwallon Long-Hand** completed the process by destroying the last Irish settlements on Anglesey.

Maelgwn was the first king to enjoy the fruits of his family's conquest and he is considered the founder of the medieval kingdom's royal family.

He is thus most commonly referenced by appending the name of the kingdom to his own: **Maelgwn Gwynedd**, and is conspicuously depicted in a negative light, being foiled in unscrupulous actions of deceit and being outwitted.

*There is nothing to suggest that Maelgwn held sway over any larger area.*

By tradition, his *Ilys* (English: royal court, literally hall) was located at Deganwy, in the Creuddyn peninsula of Rhos.

Tradition also holds that he died at nearby Llanrhos, and was buried there.<sup>258</sup>

Tradition holds that he died of the 'Yellow Plague' of Rhos.<sup>259</sup>

Maelgwn was a generous contributor to the cause of Christianity throughout Wales.

He made donations to support Saint Brynach in Dyfed, Saint Cadoc in Gwynllwg, Saint Cybi in Anglesey, Saint Padarn in Ceredigion, and Saint Tydecho in Powys.

He is also associated with the foundation of **Bangor**,<sup>260</sup> but hard evidence of this is lacking.

Holding a regional pre-eminence among the "four kings," Maelgwn was the "dragon of the island" - where the **Isle of Anglesey** is the ancient stronghold of the kings of Gwynedd.<sup>261</sup>

He overthrew his paternal uncle (Latin: *avunculus*) to gain the throne; that he had taken up life as a monk but then returned to the secular world;

that he had been married and divorced, then remarried to the widow of his nephew after being responsible for his nephew's death - and that he was tall.

The fact that Maelgwn's donations to religious foundations are not restricted to the Kingdom of Gwynedd but are spread throughout northern and southern Wales in the regions where the descendants of Cunedda held sway<sup>262</sup> implies that Maelgwn had a responsibility to those regions beyond the responsibilities of a king to his own kingdom.

The pestilence that killed him was one of the 'Three Dreadful Pestilences of the Isle of Britain' - the **Yellow Plague of Rhos**, originating from the carcasses of the dead.

Malgo had two sons - Ennianus and Runo. Maelgwn Gwynedd had two sons - Rhun Hir and *Eurgain*.

**Taliesin**<sup>263</sup> is said to have been dispossessed of his property by Maelgwn, and so cursed him.

<sup>258</sup> Other traditions say that he was buried at **Ynys Seiriol** (English: Island of St. Seiriol, Puffin Island), off easternmost Anglesey. There are no historical records to confirm or deny these traditions.

<sup>259</sup> One of the 'Three Dreadful Pestilences of the Isle of Britain.' The record says only that it was a "great mortality," which followed the outbreak of the great **Plague of Justinian** in **Constantinople** by a few years.

<sup>260</sup> It is the oldest city in Wales. One of the smallest cities in Britain - it is a university city. The origins of the city date back to the founding of a monastic establishment on the site of **Bangor Cathedral** by the Celtic **Saint Deiniol** in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

<sup>261</sup> In his work *On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain* written c. 540, **Gildas** makes an allegorical condemnation of five British kings by likening them to the beasts of the **Christian Apocalypse** as expressed in the biblical Book of Revelation, 13:2: the lion, leopard, bear, and dragon, with the dragon supreme among them. He says that Maelgwn is the "dragon of the island", and goes on with a litany of moral accusations, in the process describing him almost as a regional high king over the other kings (the power-giving dragon of the Apocalypse). The Isle of Anglesey was the base of power of the kings of Gwynedd, so describing Maelgwn as the "dragon of the island" is appropriate.

In the course of his condemnations, Gildas makes passing reference to the other beasts mentioned in the **Apocalypse**, such as the eagle, serpent, calf, and wolf. The reason for Gildas' disaffection for these individuals is unknown. He was selective in his choice of kings, as he had no comments concerning the kings of the other British kingdoms that were thriving at the time, such as Rheged, Gododdin, Elmet, Pengwern/Powys, or the kingdoms of modern-day southern England. That he chose only the kings associated with one king's pre-eminence (Maelgwn, the "dragon") suggests a reason other than his claim of moral outrage over personal depravity. Neither outrage nor a doctrinal dispute would seem to justify beginning the condemnation of the five kings with a personal attack against the mother of one of the kings, calling her an "unclean lioness."

<sup>262</sup> Maelgwn's ancestor **Cunedda** arrived in Gwynedd 146 years before Maelgwn's reign, coming from **Manaw Gododdin**, and expelled the Scots [i.e., the Gaels] with great slaughter.

Saint Eurgain is said to be Maelgwn's daughter.

Saint Cwyllog daughter of Caw Cawlwyd of Twr Celyn had been given lands by Maelgwn Gwynedd...

Caw and his children who had been driven from their lands by the **Gwyddelian Picts**, and who then came to Wales and were given land in Anglesey by Maelgwn.

v

**Rhun ap Maelgwn Gwynedd** (died c. 586) *son of Maelgwn Gwynedd, also known as Rhun Hir ap Maelgwn Gwynedd*

(English: Rhun the Tall), was King of Gwynedd (reigned c. 547 – c. 586).

He came to the throne on the death of his father, King Maelgwn Gwynedd.

He waged a war against **Rhydderch Hael** of Alt Clut and the kings of the Cymric Men of the North (Welsh: *Gwŷr y Gogledd*) from the kingdoms of Gododdin or Manaw Gododdin.

The northern prince Elidyr Mwynfawr ap Gorwst Priodawr (English: Elidyr the Courteous son of Gorwst Priodawr) had been slain at Aber Mewydus (now called 'Cadnant', or 'Battle Brook') in Arfon, not far from Rhun's *llys* (English: royal court) at Llanbeblig.

Elidyr's powerful relatives in the North invaded Gwynedd in retaliation, burning Arfon in the process.

The Northern host was led by Clydno Eiddin; Nudd the Generous son of Senyllt; Mordaf the Generous son of Serfan; and Rhydderch Hael son of Tudwal Tudelyd.

Elidyr was also the husband of Rhun's sister Eurgain.

Rhun then assembled an army and proceeded to the banks of the **Gweryd**<sup>264</sup> in the North.

Rhun and his army remained in the North for a considerable length of time.

The outcome was the death of Rhun ap Maelgwn in battle.

The reason why Elidyr was in Gwynedd and the circumstance of his death are not known, though it is certain from their actions that his northern relatives blamed someone in Gwynedd.

It is speculated that hat Elidyr was contesting Rhun's succession to Maelgwn Gwynedd's throne.

**Caerhun** (English: Fort of Rhun) was situated along the Roman road between the larger Roman forts of **Deva** (at modern Chester) and **Segontium** (near modern Caernarfon).

It is supposed to have been one of Rhun's strongholds. It guarded an important crossing on the River Conwy at Tal-y-Cafn which led to the pass at Bwlch-y-Ddeufaen, an entrance to **Eryri** (English: Snowdonia), the defensive heartland of the Kingdom of Gwynedd. Its military significance would certainly have been noticed by both defenders and potential aggressors.

vi

**Beli ap Rhun** (c. 517 – c. 599) was King of Gwynedd (reigned c. 586 – c. 599).

He had at least two sons - there was yet another son of Beli, who was famed for his military exploits.

Beli was either the father or grandfather of Saint Edeyrn son of Nudd or Lludd son of Beli.

He succeeded his father Rhun ap Maelgwn as king, and was in turn succeeded by his son Iago.

**Iago ap Beli** (c. 540 – c. 616) (Latin: Iacobus Belii filius; English: Saint James son of Beli) son and successor of King Beli ap Rhun was King of Gwynedd (reigned c. 599 – c. 616).

He would be succeeded as king by his son, Cadfan ap Iago.

<sup>263</sup> **Taliesin** of legend is placed in difficult or impossible situations but invariably overcomes all obstacles, usually through feats of magic.

<sup>264</sup> The banks of the River Forth or the Firth of Forth, which William Forbes Skene says was still called the 'Weryd' in 1165.

Iago's grandson was the future King Cadwallon. Cadwallon and King Edwin of Northumbria were enemies: King

Edwin invaded Gwynedd and drove King Cadwallon into exile, and it would be Cadwallon, in alliance with Penda of Mercia, who would ultimately defeat and kill Edwin in 633 at the **Battle of Hatfield Chase** (Welsh: *Gwaith Meigen*).

In 588 King Ælla of Deira died, and Æthelfrith of Bernicia took the opportunity to invade and conquer Deira, driving Ælla's 3-year old infant son, the future Edwin of Northumbria, into exile. Edwin would eventually ally himself with Rædwald of East Anglia in 616, defeating and killing Æthelfrith and becoming one of Northumbria's most successful kings.

Iago founded a deanery at the cathedral at Bangor: (*Iago ap Beli Rex Decanatu Ecclesiam ditavit*).<sup>265</sup>

King Iago ap Beli died a violent death as the result of an axe-blow by one of his own men - a certain Cadafael Wyllt (English: Cadafael the Wild).

vii

**Keredic** (Welsh: *Ceredig*) was a legendary king of the Britons. Keredic's rule was so unpopular that the Saxons enlisted the aid of an army of Vandals from Ireland to drive him from his kingdom.

• • •

**Cadfan ap Iago** (c. 569 – c. 625) son and successor of King Iago ap Beli was King of Gwynedd (reigned c. 616 – c. 625). Cadfan *sapientissimus* (English: most wise), came to the throne near the time of the **Battle of Chester** (Welsh: *Gwaith Caerleon*) in 616, in which the Northumbrians under Æthelfrith decisively defeated the neighboring Welsh Kingdom of Powys and then massacred the *monks of Bangor Is Coed*.

At some point, Cadfan<sup>266</sup> had resigned as king to live out his remaining years as an ecclesiast. A local prince named '**Gwytheint**' gave Clynnog Fawr to God and Saint Beuno, who was then Abbot at the monastery at Clynnog, and that the donation was free from taxes and obligations forever.

Cadfan was succeeded as king by his son, Cadwallon ap Cadfan.

Beuno founded a Convent at Clynnog in 616, and Cadfan was Beuno's great patron, promising him extensive lands. The promise was carried out by Cadfan's son, King Cadwallon, and Cadwallon was given a *golden scepter* worth 60 cows as a token of acknowledgment.

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"The great king Mailcun reigned among the Britons, i.e., in Gwynedd."  
Maelgwn's ancestor **Cunedda** arrived in Gwynedd 146 years before Maelgwn's reign, coming from Manaw Gododdin,<sup>267</sup> and expelled the Scots [i.e., the Gaels] with great slaughter.

viii

**Cadwallon ap Cadfan** (died 634) son and successor of Cadfan ap Iago was the King of Gwynedd from around 625 until his death in battle.

He is best remembered as the King of the Britons who invaded and conquered Northumbria,<sup>268</sup>

defeating and killing its king, Edwin of Northumbria, prior to his own death in battle against Oswald of Bernicia.

Cadwallon ap Cadfan son of Cadfan ap Iago and a descendant of Maelgwn Gwynedd and Cunedda was certainly affected by the ambitions of Edwin, King of Northumbria, the most powerful king in Britain, conquering the Brythonic kingdom of Elmet (what is now western Yorkshire) and ejecting its king, Cerdic.

**Ceretic of Elmet** (or **Ceredig ap Gwallog**) was the last king of Elmet, "King of the Britons" - perhaps meaning just the Britons of that area; a Brythonic kingdom that existed in the West Yorkshire area of Northern Britain during sub-Roman times.

**Saint Hild of Whitby** (born 614), a member of the Deiran Royal family, was taken to the court of King Ceretic, after fleeing from the Northumbrian usurper, Æthelfrith of Bernicia. When **Edwin of Deira** returned to power in 617, Ceretic was expelled, supposedly due to complicity in the poisoning of Hilda's father, and his kingdom was annexed to Northumbria. He is generally thought to be identical to **Ceredig ap Gwallog**, a 'Man of the North,' whose father, **Gwallog ap Llaenmog**, is associated with Elmet by the poet, *Taliesin*. This opened the door to the Irish Sea, and Edwin successfully extended his rule to the "Mevanian Islands" – the Isle of Man and Anglesey.

• • •

In 629, Cadwallon, a heroic leader against Edwin, was besieged at Glannauc (Priestholm, or Puffin Island), a small island off eastern Anglesey.

Cadwallon surviving until after the **Battle of the Winwaed** in 654 or 655), Cadwallon went to Ireland and then to the island of Guernsey. Welsh poets refer to the **Battle at Digoll** (Long Mountain) and mention that Cadwallon spent time in Ireland before returning to Britain to defeat Edwin. From there, Cadwallon led an army into Dumnonia, where he encountered and defeated the Mercians besieging Exeter, and forced their king, Penda, into an alliance.

Cadwallon married a half-sister of Penda.

In any case, Penda and Cadwallon together made war against the Northumbrians. A battle was fought at **Hatfield Chase** on 12 October 633, which ended in the defeat and death of Edwin and his son **Osfrith**. After this, the Kingdom of Northumbria fell into disarray, divided between its sub-kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia, but the war continued: "Cadwallon and Penda went and did for the whole land of Northumbria." Cadwallon was besieged by the new king of Deira, **Osric**, "in a strong town"; Cadwallon, however, "sallied out on a sudden with all his forces, by surprise, and destroyed him [Osric] and all his army."

After this, Cadwallon ruled over the "provinces of the Northumbrians" for a year, "not like a victorious king, but like a rapacious and bloody genocidal tyrant."

Cadwallon, "though he bore the name and professed himself a Christian, was so barbarous in his disposition and behaviour, that he neither spared the female sex, nor the innocent age of children, but with savage cruelty put them to tormenting deaths, ravaging all their country for a long time, and resolving to cut off all the race of the English within the borders of Britain."

<sup>265</sup> "The earliest historical testimony to a Dean at Bangor is 1162"

<sup>266</sup> **Saint Beuno** and the **monastery at Clynnog Fawr** are often cited in conjunction with Cadfan.

<sup>267</sup> **Manaw Gododdin** was the narrow coastal region on the south side of the Firth of Forth, part of the Brythonic-speaking Kingdom of Gododdin in the post-Roman Era. It is notable as the homeland of Cunedda prior to his conquest of North Wales.

<sup>268</sup> His conquest of Northumbria, which he held for a year or two after Edwin died, made him the last Briton to hold substantial territory in eastern Britain until the rise of the Tudor dynasty. He was thereafter remembered as a national hero by the Britons and as a tyrant by the Anglo-Saxons of Northumbria.

*But Cadwallon's alliance with the Anglo-Saxon Penda undermines the assertion that he had attempted to exterminate the English.<sup>269</sup>*

The new king of Bernicia, **Eanfrith**, was also killed by Cadwallon when the former went to him in an attempt to negotiate peace. However, Cadwallon was defeated by an army under Eanfrith's brother, Oswald, at the **Battle of Heavenfield**, "though he had most numerous forces, which he boasted nothing could withstand." Cadwallon was killed at a place called "Denis's-brook."

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**TO BE CONTINUED**

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<sup>269</sup> Additionally, the fact that **Cædwalla**, king of Wessex a generation after Cadwallon's death, bore a name derived directly from the British *Cadwallon* suggests that Cadwallon's reputation could not have been so poor among the Saxons of Wessex as it was in Northumbria.

# The Legendary Kings of Britain

## I



Brutus, the mythological founder of London

### Brutus I, or Brute of Troy

*legendary descendant of the Trojan hero Aeneas and his first wife - Creusa (daughter of Priam and Hecuba)*  
is known in medieval British legend  
as the eponymous founder and first king of Britain.<sup>270</sup>

Brutus son of Alba Silvus son of Ascanius traces his genealogy back to Ham, son of Noah.

Furthermore, he was great-grandson of the legendary Roman king Numa Pompilius son of Pomponius - successor of Romulus son of Rhea Silvia daughter of Numitor, king of Alba Longa.

These Christianizing traditions conflict with the classical Trojan genealogies, relating the Trojan royal family to Greek gods.

Aeneas settled in Italy after the **Trojan War**, and his son **Ascanius Iulus** founded **Alba Longa**, *one of the precursors of Rome*.

Ascanius married, and his wife became pregnant.

A magician who was asked to predict the child's future said it would be a boy

and that he would be the bravest and most beloved in Italy...

it was also foretold that he would kill both his parents.

Enraged,

Ascanius had the magician put to death.

The mother died in childbirth.

The boy - Brutus - later accidentally killed his father with an arrow and was banished from Italy.

Traveling to Greece, he discovers a group of Trojans enslaved there. He becomes their leader, and after a series of battles they defeat the Greek king **Pandrasus** by attacking his camp at night after capturing the guards.

He takes him hostage and forces him to let his people go.

He is given Pandrasus' daughter Ignoge in marriage, and ships and provisions for the voyage, and sets sail.

The Trojans landed on a deserted island and discovered an abandoned temple to Diana.

After performing the appropriate ritual, Brutus fell asleep in front of the goddess's statue

and he was given a vision of the land where he is destined to settle, an island in the western ocean inhabited only by a few giants.

After some adventures in North Africa and a close encounter with the Sirens,

wandering among the islands of the **Tyrrhenian Sea**,

Brutus discovered another group of exiled Trojans living on the shores [

] led by the prodigious warrior **Corineus**, *eponymous founder of Cornwall*.

Corineus and his people joined him in his travels.

After wandering through Gaul, where he founded the city of **Tours**,

Corineus provoked a war with **Goffarius Pictus**, king of Aquitania, by hunting in his forests without permission, and killed thousands single-handedly with his battle-axe.



Corineus  
The Giant of Guildhall

One of two wooden figures displayed in the Guildhall in London, carved by Captain Richard Saunders in 1709, replacing earlier wicker and pasteboard effigies which were traditionally carried in the Lord Mayor's Show. They represented Gogmagog and Corineus, but were later known as Gog and Magog. Both figures were destroyed during the London Blitz in 1940; new figures were carved in 1953.

After defeating Goffarius, the Trojans crossed to the island of Albion, which Brutus renamed Britain after himself, and filled it with his descendants.<sup>271</sup>

Corineus settled in Cornwall, which was then inhabited by giants. Brutus and his army killed most of them, but their leader - the largest giant - Goemagot (Gogmagog), was kept alive for a wrestling match with Corineus.

The fight took place near Plymouth, and Corineus killed him by throwing him over a cliff.

<sup>270</sup> The island of Britain derives its name from Brutus, a Roman consul" who conquered Spain. This is ultimately derived from Isidore of Seville's popular 7<sup>th</sup>-century work *Etymologiae*, in which it was speculated that Britain was named after the Roman general **Decimus Junius Brutus Callaicus**, who pacified Further Spain in 138 BC.

<sup>271</sup> His reign is synchronized to the time the High Priest **Eli** was judge in Israel, and when the **Ark of the Covenant** was taken by the Philistines.

Brutus then founded a city on the banks of the River Thames, which he calls **Troia Nova**, or New Troy.<sup>272</sup>  
He created laws for his people and rules for twenty-four years.  
After his death he is buried in Trinovantum,  
and the island is divided between his three sons: Locrinus (England),  
Albanactus (Scotland) and Kamber (Wales).

## II

**Camber** (also **Kamber**) son of Brutus, and a descendant of Aeneas of Troy, was the legendary first king of Cambria.<sup>273</sup>

Upon his father's death he was given Cambria,  
while his younger brother Albanactus got Alba (the territory corresponding to modern Scotland; from Welsh *Yr Alban*) and his older brother Locrinus received **Logres** (corresponding to England; from Welsh *Lloegr*) and the title of King of the Britons.

**Albanactus** was the founding king of Albania or Albany. His territory was that north of the **River Humber - infer**.

**Locrinus** oldest son of Brutus and a descendant of the Trojans through Aeneas ruled a portion of Britain called Loegria, named after him, which is roughly the boundaries of modern-day England. He reigned 10 years, most of which were peaceful.

**Humber, king of the Huns**, invaded Albany from Germany and met Albanactus' army in battle, where Humber killed Albanactus.

This forced the people of Albany to flee south to Albanactus' brother, Locrinus.<sup>274</sup>

When Albanactus was murdered by Humber, King of the Huns, Camber allied with Locrinus attacking and defeating him... fighting Humber to the banks of a river where he drowned  
The river was named Humber after this battle.  
Locrinus divided up the spoils of war with his allies, only keeping gold and silver found on their ships for himself.

## III

### Gwendolen

After Brutus died the rest of Britain was divided between his three sons, Locrinus (England), Kamber (Wales) and Albanactus (Scotland).

Locrinus agreed to marry Corineus's daughter **Queen Gwendolen**, (Latin: *Guendoloēna*), but fell in love instead with his secret lover **Estrildis**,<sup>275</sup> a captured German princess, brought to Britain as a captive of **Chief Humber the Hun** during his invasion following the death of King Brutus. Eventually the invading Nordic "Huns" were defeated by Brutus' three sons,

the eldest of whom - Locrinus - fell in love with the beautiful Germanic princess upon discovering her in one of Humber's ships.

Locrinus, forced into a "diplomatic" marriage, honoured his prior betrothal to Gwendolen but kept Estrildis as his beloved mistress.

For seven years he secretly visited her in a cave beneath **Trinovantum** (London, i.e., "New Troy"), where she was cared for by servants. And Estrildis bore him a daughter, **Habren**.

When Corineus died, Locrinus deserted Gwendolen and their son **Maddan** and declared Estrildis his queen, thereby legitimizing Habren. Soon after Maddan's birth, Locrinus sent him off to Corineus, the child's grandfather.

Gwendolen retaliated her divorce by raising a Cornish army against Locrinus. Having built up a large army, she waged war against her ex-husband. The two armies met near the River Stour, the dividing line between Cornwall and Loegria, and there Locrinus was killed. His wife, Gwendolen, ruled after his death; taking on the leadership of the Britons herself, becoming their first recorded **queen regnant**.

She had Estrildis and her daughter, Habren, drowned in a river and published an edict though all Britain, that the river should bear the damsel's name, hoping by this to perpetuate her memory, and by that the infamy of her husband. Thereafter it has been called **Habren** in Welsh (*which is the River Severn in English*).<sup>276</sup>

Gwendolen then ruled independently in the manner her father had in Cornwall. Her victory and subsequent rise to fame as a righteous ruler shows how fractured Britain was at the time. **Gwendolen**,<sup>277</sup> legendary queen of Britain, reigned peacefully for fifteen years, then she abdicated in favor of her son and lived out the remainder of her life in Cornwall.

## IV

**Maddan** son of King Locrinus and Queen Gwendolen, who both ruled Britain separately, was a legendary king of the Britons. He was born during the reign of Locrinus but soon after, his grandfather Corineus of Cornwall died and his mother defeated Locrinus in battle.

<sup>276</sup> So that to this day the river is called in the British tongue Sabren, which by the corruption of the name is another language Sabrina.

<sup>277</sup> Gwendolen has been seen as a prime example of a female invader who successfully changed the entire direction of the monarchies in Albion. She was one of the first British Queens to demonstrate the power women, especially royal women, could have. She displayed power over the line of succession, proved just how far ruling powers could extend even when in the hands of a woman, and used what was seen as a detriment to her prospects (her gender) to her advantage. Gwendolen is an example of a queen willing to go to any lengths to protect her kingdom, resorting to violence and invasion. She occupied a role as both insider and outsider to King Locrinus's court and she used that unique status to become a *so-called* savior of Britain.

The *Historia Regum Britanniae* says that at the time of her death Samuel was judge in Judea, Aeneas Silvius was ruling Alba Longa, and Homer was gaining fame in Greece.

<sup>272</sup> The name is in time corrupted to Trinovantum, and the city is later called London

<sup>273</sup> **Cambria** is a name for Wales, being the Latinized form of the Welsh name *Cymru* (Wales).

<sup>274</sup> All this was supposedly before the Picts and Scots had invaded. Later Kings of England – particularly Edward I – used the Brutus and Albanactus legend as an excuse to claim superiority over and to conquer Scotland, arguing that as Locrinus was the oldest brother, so he and hence England had superior status. The same argument, of course, extended over Wales, as Camber was also junior to Locrinus.

<sup>275</sup> Her name is probably a Latinized form of the medieval name *Estrild* (Old English: *Éastorhild*), which survived in England only until the 12<sup>th</sup> century, according to the 1984 *Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names*.

His mother reigned for the fifteen years of Maddan's adolescence then she abdicated in his favor.

Soon after taking the throne, he married and became the father of Mempricius and Malin.

For forty years he reigned peacefully until his death when civil war broke out between his sons.

Upon his father's death, war broke out between **Mempricius** (*Welsh: Membyr*) son of King Maddan with his brother, Malin, over who would dominate Britain.

Mempricius called a conference with his brother and other delegates to end the war between the two brothers.

Once there, Mempricius killed Malin and took the throne of the Britons for himself.

He ruled as a tyrant for 20 years,<sup>278</sup> killing most of the distinguished men on the island. More so, he defeated and killed all other claimants to the throne. He abandoned his wife and his son, Ebraucus, to live **a life of sodomy**.

While on a hunting expedition, **Mempricius** was separated from his companions and attacked by a pack of wolves. He died and was succeeded by his son Ebraucus as monarch.

ii

**Ebraucus** (*Welsh: Efrawg/Efrog*) son of Mempricius became king and reigned 39 years.

He was admired, tall, and remarkably strong.

He was the first to wage war on the Gauls since the time of Brutus I. By pillaging the cities and shores and slaughtering many men, he became extremely wealthy

and enriched the lands of Britain.

He founded two settlements:

Kaerebrauc, the City of Ebraucus (Eboracum), north of the Humber (*this later became York, whose Welsh name is Efrog*); and Alclud in Albany (*now part of Dunbarton, capital of Strathclyde*).

Furthermore, he "bulideth the town of Maidens, (*now called Edinburgh Castle*),

being planted in the uttermost part of Britain, now called Scotland." And he built the "castle of Montrose."

He had twenty wives who produced twenty sons and thirty daughters. All his daughters he sent to his cousin Silvius Alba in Alba Longa (Italy)

to be married to the other Trojan descendants.

Except for Brutus Greenshield, all of Ebraucus' sons, led by **Assaracus**,

went to Germany, creating a kingdom there.

Brutus thus succeeded Ebraucus upon his death.

iii

**Brutus II** (*Welsh: Brutus Darian Las*) called **Greenshield** (*Latin: Viridescutum*) son of Ebraucus was a legendary king of the Britons,

though greatly renowned neither at home nor in warfare.

He was the eldest of twenty sons and the only remaining son of Ebraucus in Britain at the time of his death.

He reigned for twelve years after his father's death.

He was succeeded by his son, Leil.

Brutus Greenshield led an expedition against the French at Hainaut - "to repair his father's loss"

<sup>278</sup> According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, he reigned at the same period of time as Saul, the King in Judea, and Eurysthenes, King in Sparta.

he fought "a second battle at Henault with Brunchild [Prince of Hainaut] at the mouth of the river Scaldis.

The battle turned his green shield red with blood.

Greenshield's Hainaut expedition is the mythical foundation of the British empire, the first foreign venture to expand British influence in the world.

iv

**Leil**<sup>279</sup> (*son of Brutus Greenshield*) was a legendary king of the Britons.

Leil was a peaceful and just king and took advantage of the prosperity afforded him by his ancestors. He founded Carlisle, Cumbria (Caerleil: Fort of Leil) in the north as a tribute to this prosperity.

He reigned for twenty-five years until he grew old and feeble. His inactivity sparked a civil war, during which he died. He was succeeded by his son Rud Hud Hudibras.

v

**Rud Hud Hudibras**<sup>280</sup> (*Welsh: Run baladr bras*) son of King Leil was a legendary king of the Britons.

During the waning years of Leil's reign, the kingdom of the Britons became unstable, and civil war broke out.

Rud Hud Hudibras became king after his father's death and reigned for 39 years,

ending the civil war and restoring peace to the kingdom.

During his reign, he founded Kærreint, *later renamed Canterbury by the Angles*.

He is also said to have founded Kaerguenit (Winchester) and Paladur Castle (Shaftesbury).

He was succeeded by his son Bladud.

vi



<sup>279</sup> Geoffrey asserts that Leil reigned at the time when Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem and Silvus Epitus was king of Alba Longa.

<sup>280</sup> Geoffrey places Rud Hud Hudibras' reign during the time Capys was king in Alba Longa and Haggai, Amos, Joel, and Azariah were prophesying in Israel. Haggai began his ministry around 520 BC, whilst Amos is said to have prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II, probably around 760 BC.

An image of Bladud attempting to fly with his artificial wings (from the Lyte Pedigree of 1605.  
British Library Catalog entry Add. Ms. 48343).

**Bladud** or Blaiddyd<sup>281</sup> son of Rud Hud Hudibras - the tenth ruler in line from the first King, Brutus - was a legendary king of the Britons.

He is said to have founded the city of Bath.

Bladud was sent by his father to be educated in the liberal arts in Athens.

After his father's death he returned, with four philosophers, and founded a university at Stamford in Lincolnshire, which flourished until it was suppressed by Saint Augustine of Canterbury on account of heresies which were taught there.

Supposedly he ruled for twenty years from 863 AD or perhaps 500 AD, in which time he built Kaerbadum or Caervaddon (Bath), creating the hot springs there by the use of magic. He dedicated the city to the goddess Athena (or Minerva), and in honour of her lit undying fires, whose flames turned to balls of stone as they grew low, with new ones springing up in their stead.<sup>282</sup>



The statue of King Bladud overlooking the King's Bath at Bath carries the date of 1699, but its inclusion in earlier pictures shows that it is much older than this

<sup>281</sup> The meaning of the name is "Wolf-lord" (Welsh *blaidd* "wolf" + *iudd* "lord"). Geoffrey made Bladud a contemporary of the biblical prophet Elijah.

<sup>282</sup> an embellishment of an account from the fourth-century writer Solinus of the use of local coal on the altars of her temple.

He is said to have founded the city because while he was in Athens he

contracted **leprosy**,

and when he returned home he was imprisoned as a result, but escaped and went far off to go into hiding.

He found employment as a swineherd at Swainswick, about two miles

from the later site of Bath,

and noticed that his pigs would go into an alder-moor in cold weather and return covered in black mud.

He found that the mud was warm, and that they did it to enjoy the heat.

He also noticed that the pigs which did this did not suffer from skin diseases as others did, and on trying the mud bath himself... found that he was cured of his leprosy.

He was then restored to his position as heir-apparent to his father, and founded Bath so that others might also benefit as he had done.

He also encouraged the practice of necromancy, or divination through the spirits of the dead.

Through this practice, he is said to have constructed wings for himself and to have tried to fly

to the temple of Apollo in Trinovantum (London) from Troja Nova (New Troy),

but was killed when he hit a wall, being dashed to pieces and breaking his neck.

He was supposedly buried at New Troy and succeeded by his son, Leir.

## V

### King Leir

**Leir**<sup>283</sup> son of *Bladud* was a legendary king of the Britons.<sup>284</sup>

Leir was the eponymous founder of the city of Leicester

(*Ligorceastre* in Old English; Old Welsh: *Cair Lerion*, Welsh: *Caerlŷr*),

which he called (using the Old Welsh form of the city's name)

**Kaerleir** ("City of Leir").



King Leir and his daughters, a marginal illustration in the *Northumberland Bestiary*, c. 1250.

Leir was said to have been the end of Brutus' male line of descent, siring three daughters: Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia.

As he neared his death, he divided his kingdom among his three daughters.

Goneril and Regan flattered their father and, at the advice of Leir's nobles, were married off to the Dukes of Albany and Cornwall, respectively. Cordelia, despite being her father's favorite, refused to flatter the king.

<sup>283</sup> *Leir*, *Lerion*, and *Ligora(ceastre)* all derive from the old Brittonic name of the River Soar, \**Ligera* or \**Ligora*.

The dating is inexact, but Geoffrey made Bladud a contemporary of the biblical prophet Elijah. Leir was given the longest reign of Geoffrey's kings, ruling for sixty years.

<sup>284</sup> Leir's reign would have occurred around the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, around the time of the founding of Rome.

feeling that he should not need special assurances of her love, and was given no land to rule.

**King Aganippus of the Franks** courted and married Cordelia, despite Leir refusing to pay a dowry.  
She moved to Gaul and lived there for many years.

Leir then gave Goneril and Regan half of his kingdom, planning to bequeath them the remainder at his death; instead, his sons-in-law rebelled and seized the whole of the kingdom.

Duke Maglaurus of Albany, Goneril's husband, maintained Leir with a retinue of 60 knights, but his wife reduced this by half after two years. Leir then fled to Regan, who reduced his entourage to only five men. Returning to Albany and pleading with Goneril, Leir was left with a single knight for protection

At this point, Leir feared both his older daughters and fled to France. He sent Cordelia a messenger when he was outside her court at

Karitia.  
She had him bathed, royally clothed, and assigned a fittingly large band of retainers.  
He was then officially received by the king and made regent of France,

with the Frankish nobles vowing to restore him to his former glory.

Leir, his daughter, and her husband invaded Britain and successfully overthrew his daughters and sons-in-law.

Leir ruled three years and then died.

Cordelia succeeded him and buried him in an underground shrine to the god Janus

beneath the River Soar near Leicester – *allegedly at the current site of the city's Jewry Wall*.<sup>285</sup>

An annual feast was held nearby in his honour.

ii

### Cordelia

**Queen Cordelia** *youngest daughter of Leir* was a legendary Queen of the Britons - and the second ruling queen of pre-Roman Britain (after Gwendolen - *supra*).

She ruled peacefully for five years until her sisters' sons, Cunedagius and Marganus, came of age.

The dukes of Cornwall and Albany, *respectively*, they despised the rule of a woman when they claimed proper descent to rule.

They raised armies and fought against Cordelia, who fought in person at numerous battles.

She was eventually captured and imprisoned by her nephews. In her grief, she committed **suicide**.

Cunedagius succeeded her in the kingship of Britain in the lands southwest of the Humber.

Marganus ruled the region northeast of the Humber. Civil war broke out between them soon after.

iii

**Marganus** (*Welsh: Margan*) *son of Duke Maglaurus of Albany and Goneril daughter of King Leir* was a legendary king of the Britons. Marganus grandson of Leir despised the rule of his aunt Cordelia in Britain.

<sup>285</sup> The name of the wall (first recorded in c.1665) is unlikely to relate to Leicester's medieval Jewish community, which was never large and which was expelled from the town by **Simon de Montfort** in 1231.

With the help of his cousin Cunedagius, Marganus took over the kingdom from Cordelia and ruled half of it. Following Cordelia's suicide, Marganus came to rule the region of Britain northeast of the Humber.

Marganus was eldest male heir of Leir and, influenced by his peers, became discontent with ruling only half of Britain. He began a **scorched earth** march through Cornwall until reaching the army of Cunedagius. Cunedagius defeated Marganus and Marganus fled throughout Britain. Cunedagius followed him throughout Britain until cornering him in Wales. There, Cunedagius killed Marganus and became king of all Britain. He named the place Margon in honour of his cousin.

iv

**Cunedagius** (*Latinized form; Welsh: Cunedda*) *son of Duke Henwinus of Cornwall and Regan daughter of King Leir* was a legendary king of the Britons.<sup>286</sup> Cunedagius grandson of Leir despised the rule of his aunt Cordelia. With the help of his cousin Marganus, Cunedagius took over the kingdom from Cordelia and ruled half of it. Following Cordelia's suicide, Cunedagius came to rule the region of Britain southwest of the Humber.

He ruled all of Britain for 33 years and was succeeded by his son, Rivallo.

**Rivallo** (*Welsh: Rhwallon*) *son of Cunedagius* was a legendary king of the Britons. He was a young king and reigned with moderation - a "peaceful and fortunate youth, who ruled the kingdom well"

His reign, though, was troubled by **natural disasters**.<sup>287</sup> a **rain of blood** that lasted three days, a devastating **plague**, and a **great swarm of flies**.

He was succeeded by his son, Gurgustius.

**Gurgustius** (*Welsh: Gorust*) *son of Rivallo* was a legendary king of the Britons.

He was succeeded by his son **Sisillius I** - a legendary king of the Britons.

**Jago** (*Welsh: Iago; sometimes Jaygo; James in English*) *nephew of Gurgustius* was a legendary king of the Britons. He was succeeded by Sissillius' son **Kimarcus** - a legendary king of the Britons. He was succeeded by Gorboduc.

v

**Gorboduc** (*Welsh: Gorwy or Goronwy*) *son of Kimarcus* a legendary king of the Britons.

He was married to Judon.

When he became old, his sons, Ferrex and Porrex, feuded over who would take over the kingdom.

Porrex plotted to kill his brother in an ambush, but Ferrex discovered the treachery and escaped to Gaul (France).

<sup>286</sup> Geoffrey synchronizes Cunedagius' reign with the ministry of the Jewish prophet Isaiah and the founding of Rome by Romulus and Remus. Both events are dated to the 8th century BC.

<sup>287</sup> Note: Events attributed to "nature" and not "Acts of God." Premonitory warnings of the dangers of civil discord.

He enlisted the help of **King Suhardus of the Franks** and invaded Britain.  
Upon his return, he fought a battle with his brother and died there - killed by Porrex.  
The Gaulish army was also destroyed.  
Porrex himself was then killed in revenge by his own mother Judon - Ferrex had been his mother Judon's favourite son - then the high strata of society killed his mother and then there was a war between high strata and low strata leading to an **anarchy** in the society...  
this anarchy led to **Civil War** denouncing Gorboduc between five kings in Britain:

Ymner (Pinner), King of Loegria; Staterius, King of Albania; Rudaucus, King of Kambria; Cloten, King of Cornwall; and Dunvallo Molmutius.

Gorboduc died after the account of the strife between his sons.

## VI

**Dyfnwal Moelmud**<sup>288</sup> (Welsh for "Dyfnwal the Bald and Silent"; Latin: *Dunvallo Molmutius*) son of King Cloten of Cornwall was a legendary king of the Britons.  
An early king and lawmaker among the Welsh, he is credited with the codification of their **standard units of measure**.

He restored order after the "**Civil War of the Five Kings.**"

Dyfnwal was the King of Cornwall during the war created in the power vacuum left by Porrex I.  
He was braver and more courageous than all the other kings in the war.  
He defeated King Ymner (Pinner) of Loegria.  
In response, Rudaucus, king of Cambria, and Staterius, king of Albany, allied and together destroyed much of Dyfnwal's land.  
The two sides met in battle and were stalemated.  
Dyfnwal then took 600 of his men and himself and dressed themselves in the armour of the dead enemies.  
They led a charge deep into enemy lines where they killed the two kings.  
After this battle,  
Dyfnwal destroyed the remaining defenses of the kings and pillaged their lands.

Following the defeat of the rival kings,  
Dyfnwal created a crown like that of his predecessors and claimed the throne of Britain.

He created a set of rules for the kingdom called the **Molmutine Laws**, which nearly ended robbery within his kingdom... and lasted for many centuries.  
He reigned in peace and prosperity for forty years then died and was buried in the Temple of Concord - a tribute to his laws, *which resided in Trinovantum*.  
His death sparked another **civil war** between his two sons, Belinus and Brennius.

## VII

**Brennius** brother of Belinus son of Dunvallo Molmutius was a legendary king of Northumberland and Allobroges.  
In an effort to win the crown of Britain, Brennius and Balinus waged war between each other to determine who should succeed their father.

Many battles were fought between the two brothers until a time came when their friends intervened and a compromise was decided upon.

Belinus became the King of the Britons with Brennius as King of Northumberland.

Five years later, Brennius wed the daughter of the King of Norway without consulting Belinus.

Belinus invaded Northumberland and seized Brennius' land.

Brennius heard of this violation and gathered a large Norwegian army together to sail for Britain.

On the way, a fleet of ships under the King of Denmark attacked because the king wanted Brennius' wife for himself.

They fought in the open ocean and the two sides dispersed.

The King of Denmark managed to capture the wife of Brennius but he then got lost and landed on Britain.

Belinus captured the king and his brother's wife.

Brennius landed in Albany and demanded the return of all his lands and his wife.

If not, he swore he would kill Belinus if they ever met in battle.

Belinus called to arms all of Britain against Brennius and the two armies met in the forests of Calaterium.

The battle was fought ruthlessly and Belinus defeated the army of Brennius.

Brennius fled to Gaul and Belinus became king over all the Britons.

## ii

While in Gaul, Brennius traveled from king-to-king explaining his situation.

All denied him help or protection until Duke Segnius of the Allobroges befriended him.

He became highly influential in the duke's ranks and was given the duke's daughter in marriage.

The duke and all his men pledged to Brennius that if the duke produced no male heirs, Brennius would succeed him as leader of the Allobroges.

The duke died within the year and Brennius became duke.

He divided the treasures of the duke among the people and kept an open court to them all.

Soon after becoming duke, Brennius gathered together another army and made right of passage treaties with all the Gauls.

Eventually, he invaded Britain with his Gallic army and met Belinus on the battlefield *once again*.

Their mother, however, convinced Brennius to make peace, and the two brothers ruled their two realms in harmony with each other.

## iii

Following their unification, Belinus and Brennius merged their armies into one great one and invaded Gaul.

After a year of warfare, the joint army managed to subject all the Frankish kingdoms in Gaul to their authority.

Now with an even greater army, Belinus lead his great army to Italy and threatened to invade Rome.

Outside Rome, the two consuls, **Gabias** and **Porsenna**, sued for peace and offered wealth, tribute, and hostages as a sign of their submission.

Belinus and Brennius accepted and took their great army to Germany. Soon after this movement north, Rome broke the treaty and marched north,

and Brennius went to fight the Romans while Belinus remained at war with the Germans (who were being helped by various other Italian troops).

Brennius traveled south and besieged Rome for three days until his brother came to his aid in the invasion.

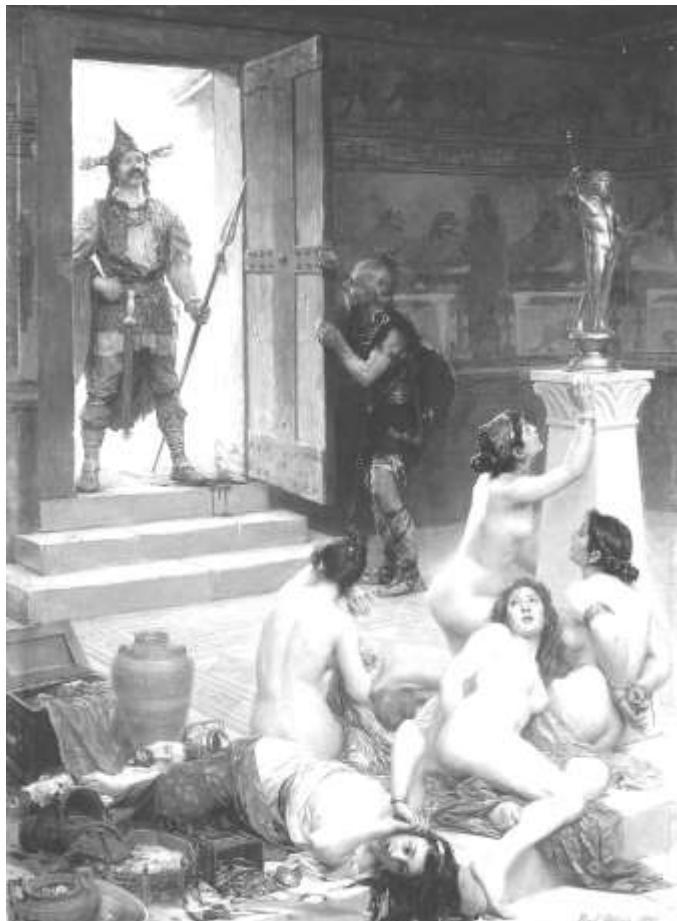
<sup>288</sup> His family were a cadet branch of the dynasty of Brutus, the dominant line having ended with Porrex I before the civil war.

The Romans defended the city for many days and were successful in repelling the invaders.

Finally, the two consuls put on armour and joined the men defending the city.

They pushed the invaders back but Belinus was able to reform the lines and stop the attacks. Brennius and Belinus continued forward until the walls were breached and the Britons and Gauls invaded the city.

Following the **Battle of the Allia** (18 July 390 BC) Brennius stayed in Rome and ruled ruthlessly for the rest of his days.



*Brennus and His Share of the Spoils*  
Paul Jamin (1893)

iv

**Belinus the Great** brother of Brennius son of Dunvallo Molmutius was a legendary king of the Britons.

He was probably named after the ancient god Belenus.<sup>289</sup>

After Brennius had left for Rome, the Italian troops who were reinforcing the Germans abandoned the Germans in a vain attempt to unite with the Roman soldiers on the other side of Belinus' army. Belinus learned of this and moved his army to a valley through which the Italians had to pass. In the morning, Belinus attacked the Italians,

who were not in armour and were unprepared for battle at that point in time.

All day the Britons pursued the Italians until it was night.

Belinus decided to join forces with his brother, who was besieging Rome.

The Romans defended the city for many days and were successful in repelling the invaders.

At last, Belinus decided to hang the hostages they were given in the treaty, but it only enraged the Romans more.

Finally, the two consuls, Gabias and Porsenna put on armour and joined the men defending the city.

They pushed the invaders back but Belinus was able to reform the lines and stop the attacks.

Belinus continued forward until the walls were breached and the Britons invaded the city.

Belinus left Brennius in Rome and returned to Britain.

He ruled in peace, building many new cities and restoring many decaying ones.

Most important of the cities he founded was **Kaerusc**, which would be renamed Caerleon (Caerleon-upon-Usk)

or the City of Legions when the Romans occupied Britain.

He continued using many of his father's laws and enacted a number of his own.

Britain became more wealthy than ever before in this time.

When Belinus finally died, he was **cremated** and placed on top of a great tower he had created.

He was succeeded by his son Gurguit Barbtruc.

v

**Gurguit Barbtruc** (Welsh: **Gwrgant Farfdrwch**) son of Belinus was a legendary king of the Britons.

*He was said to have found a home for the Irish people.*

Gurguit was a peaceful king who followed in the manner of his father and grandfather.

Yet, when the king of the Danes refused to pay tribute to Belinus' son,

Gurguit took a fleet and invaded Denmark, killing the king and reducing the country to subservience.

On the return voyage,

Gurguit came across a fleet of thirty ships of men and women, called Basclenses (Irish), under the leadership of **Partholoim** (Partholón).

They had been exiled from Spain and sought a new land to live in.

Gurguit did not allow them to settle in Britain but he gave them the isle of Ireland to settle, which was uninhabited until then.

Gurguit died peacefully and was buried in the Caerleon, a city he built up from the time his father founded it. Guithelin succeeded him to the kingship.

vi

**Guithelin** (Welsh: Kyhylyn) [ ] was a legendary king of the Britons. He ruled liberally and temperately for his life.

His Queen consort was an artisan and noblewoman named **Marcia**.

When he died, his wife took over the government as regent for their son, Sisilius II.

**Queen Marcia** was the mythical third female ruler and a regent of the Britons.

She was "one of the most illustrious and praiseworthy of women in early British history" -

<sup>289</sup> **Belenus** (also *Belenos*, *Belinus*, *Bel*, *Beli Mawr*) is a Sun God from Celtic Mythology and, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the patron deity of the Italian city of Aquileia. Called the "Fair Shining One," (or *The Shining God*) he was one of the most ancient and most widely worshiped Celtic deities and is associated with the ancient fire festival and modern *Sabbat Beltane*.

a learned woman who codified the Marcian Laws, the *Lex Martiana*.<sup>290</sup>

In her youth, she was a noblewoman and knowledgeable in all the arts.

Queen Marcia ruled Britain for about five years after Guithelin's death  
because their son was just seven years old at the time.

**Sisilius II** (Welsh: Saessyllt) came to the throne in ca 358 BC on Queen Marcia's death, ruling for the next six years.

His reign was followed by those of his sons Kinarius and Danius - both were legendary kings of the Britons.

## VIII



Morvidus, Earl of Warwick

**Morvidus** (Welsh: *Morydd map Daned*) was a legendary king of the Britons from 341 to 336 BC.

He was the illegitimate son of Danius by his mistress Tanguesteaia. He was an ill-tempered yet kind ruler most of the time. Most of the time he gave out gifts handsomely.

During his reign, the king of the Moriani invaded Northumberland and laid waste to the countryside. Morvidus met the king of Moriani in battle and defeated the invaders. After the battle, he had every captive soldier brought before him and personally killed each one, feeding his lust for blood. When he became tired, he **skinned and burned** the remaining soldiers.

He fought and killed a giant using an uprooted tree stripped of bark and branches.<sup>291</sup>

Later in his reign, a dragon - a monster appearing from the Irish Sea - began devouring the inhabitants of the western shores. In an attempt to stop this, Morvidus met the beast in single-combat and used every weapon he could against *her*, but to no avail.

The monster lunged at Morvidus and consumed him.

Morvidus had five sons: Gorbonianus, Archgallo, Elidurus, Ingenius, and Peredurus, all of which became kings of the Britons. Of these five sons, Gorbonianus, the eldest, was his direct successor.

*ii*

**Gorbonianus** (Welsh: *Gorviniaw map Morydd*) eldest son of Morvidus was a legendary king of the Britons.

Gorbonianus was unlike many kings in that he loved equity and ruled frugally.

He often would pay his respects to the **gods** and ruled his people with common justice and laws.

Many temples were built or restored in his reign and the kingdom grew increasingly more wealthy.

Protection was given to the country farmers from their masters.

He gave wealth to his soldiers as to stop unnecessary violence against the peasantry or neighbours.

He reigned for some time then died and was buried in Trinovantum. He was succeeded by his brother Archgallo, who was deposed for his wickedness, and the kingship passed back and forth among the sons of Morvidus for several years.

After the death of the final brother, Elidurus, the kingship passed to an unnamed son of Gorbonianus.

*iii*

**Archgallo** (Welsh: *Arthal map Morydd*) second son of Morvidus was a legendary king of the Britons.

Archgallo began as an evil king bent on destroying the nobles and undoing all his brother had done. He gained a fortune of stolen wealth from the nobles. This caused the nobles to rebel and they deposed Archgallo and replaced him with his brother, Elidurus.

Archgallo wandered throughout the neighbouring countries for five years without friends or a home until he returned to Britain.

While he was wandering in the Forests of Calaterium, his brother, Elidurus, found him and embraced him as a brother.

He took him to a nearby city and hid him in a room.

For a year, Elidurus faked sickness and required all the nobles of the kingdom to visit him.

Once there, Elidurus demanded each pledge their allegiance to Archgallo again or they would be beheaded.

They complied and after the last had pledged, Elidurus took Archgallo to York

and removed his own crown and reinstated Archgallo's kingship.

During Archgallo's second reign, he ruled peacefully and faithfully never reverting to his former ways.

<sup>290</sup> King Alfred the Great was later to translate the code into Old English as the basis of Mercian Laws, believing them to have been named after the much later Saxon kingdom of Mercia

<sup>291</sup> For this reason, he is associated with the symbol of a ragged staff, which appears in the crest of the Earl of Warwick who are believed to be descended from Morvidus.

For ten years he gave the deserved their proper wealth and administered justice throughout the realm.

Finally, he fell into a **coma** and died.

He was buried in Leicester and succeeded by Elidurus.

**Two of Archgallo's sons would later become kings of Britain:**  
*Marganus II and Enniaunus.*

iv

**Elidurus the Dutiful** (*Welsh: Elidyr map Morydd*) third son of *Morvidus* was a legendary king of the Britons.

He reigned for a few years in the manner of his eldest brother, Gorbonianus.

Soon after, *though*, his two younger brothers, Ingenius and Peredurus, built armies and attacked Elidurus.

They seized him and locked him in a guarded tower in Trinovantum. He remained locked in the tower for more than seven years.

**Ingenius** (*Welsh: Owain map Morydd*) fourth son of *Morvidus* was a legendary king of the Britons.

**Peredurus** (*Welsh: Peredur*) youngest son of *Morvidus* was a legendary king of the Britons.

Instead of fighting over who ruled the island, they split the island giving Cornwall to Ingenius and Albany to Peredurus.

Ingenius ruled his portion of the island for seven years then died, giving the whole of the island to his brother, Peredurus.

*His son Idvallo would later become king of Britain.*

Peredurus ruled moderately and was considered better than his brothers before him.

Few remembered Elidurus locked in the tower until death finally took Peredurus.

When this youngest brother, Peredurus, finally died, the realm returned to Elidurus for a third time.

He reigned for a short while in justice and virtue then died.

He was succeeded by an unnamed son of Gorbonianus.

*His son Gerennus would later become king of Britain.*

Elidurus returned once more as king following Peredurus' death.

*His son Runo later became king of Britain.*

v

The **son of Gorbonianus** was a legendary king of the Britons.

He was a good and prudent king who emulated his uncle and predecessor, Elidurus.

He was just and compassionate to his people and never faltered in his righteousness to them.

When he died, he was succeeded by his cousin, Marganus *son of Archgallo*.

**Marganus II** (*Welsh: Morgan mab Arthal*) was a legendary king of the Britons.

He ruled the kingdom in tranquility and without conflict - and was succeeded by his brother, Enniaunus.

**Enniaunus** (*Welsh: Einion mab Arthal*) brother of Marganus II *son of Archgallo* was a legendary king of the Britons.

He ruled poorly and harshly causing him to be deposed due to tyranny.  
*He was replaced with his cousin Idvallo.*

**Idvallo** (*Welsh: Eidwal mab Owain*) son of Ingenius was a legendary king of the Britons.

He reigned righteously to mend the ills his cousin had brought.  
*He was succeeded by his cousin Runo.*

vi

**Runo** (*Welsh: Rhun map Peredur*) son of King Peredurus was a legendary king of the Britons.

He was succeeded by his cousin Gerennus.

**Gerennus** (*Welsh: Geraint map Elidyr*) son of Elidurus was a legendary king of the Britons.  
He was succeeded by his son Catellus - and his descendants ruled Britain through the time of the **Roman invasion of Britain**.

**Catellus** (*Welsh: Kadell map Geraint*) son of Gerennus was a legendary king of the Britons.  
*He was succeeded by his son Millus.*

**Millus** son of Catellus was a legendary king of the Britons.  
*He was succeeded by his son Porrex II.*

**Porrex II** son of Millus was a legendary king of the Britons.  
*He was succeeded by his son Cherin.*

**Cherin** son of Porrex II was a legendary king of the Britons.  
He was succeeded by his three sons in turn, Fulgenius, Edadus, and Andragius.

**Fulgenius** eldest son of Cherin was a legendary king of the Britons.  
He was first to succeed his father.

**Edadus** second son of King Cherin succeeded Fulgenius - a legendary king of the Britons.

**Andragius** youngest son of King Cherin was a legendary king of the Britons.  
*He was succeeded by his son Urianus.*

**Urianus** son of Andragius was a legendary king of the Britons.  
*He was succeeded by Eliud.*

**Eliud**, also known as Elihud, was a legendary king of the Britons.  
He was preceded by Urianus and succeeded by Cledaucus.  
He also conquered **King Dylan the Great of the Tritons**.  
He is otherwise unattested.

**Cledaucus** (*Welsh: Clydog*) was a legendary king of the Britons.  
He was preceded by Eliud and succeeded by Clotenus.

**Clotenus** (*Welsh: Klydno*) was a legendary king of the Britons.  
He was preceded by Cledaucus and succeeded by Gurgintius.

**Gurgintius** (*Welsh: Gorwst*) was a legendary king of the Britons.  
He was preceded by Clotenus and succeeded by Merianus.

**Merianus** (*Welsh: Mairiawn*) was a legendary king of the Britons.  
He was preceded by Gurgintius and succeeded by Bledudo.

**Bledudo** (*Welsh: Blaiddyd*) second to bear this name was a legendary king of the Britons.  
He was preceded by Merianus and succeeded by Cap.

**Cap** (*Welsh: Caff*) was a legendary king of the Britons.  
He was preceded by Bledudo and succeeded by Oenus.

**Oenus** was a legendary king of the Britons.  
He was preceded by Cap and succeeded by Sisilius III.

**Sisilius III** (*Welsh: Saesyllt*) was a legendary king of the Britons.  
He shares his name with his ancestors:  
Sisilius II son of Guithelin and Queen Marcia  
and Sisilius I son of Gurgustius son of Rivallo son of Cunedagius son of Duke Henwinus of Cornwall and Regan daughter of King Leir.

He was preceded by Oenus and succeeded by Beldgabred.

**Beldgabred** (Welsh: *Blegwyrd*) was a legendary king of the Britons. Beldgabred surpassed all other musicians on every kind of instrument and was claimed to be the **god of minstrels**.

He was preceded by Sisilius III and succeeded by his brother Archmail.

**Archmail** (Welsh: *Arthmael*) was a legendary king of the Britons. He was preceded by Beldgabred, his brother, and succeeded by Eldol.

**Eldol** (Welsh: *Eidol mab Arthmael*) was a legendary king of Britain.<sup>292</sup>

**Redon** (Welsh: *Rydion mab Arthmael*) was a legendary king of the Britons.

He was preceded by Eldol and succeeded by Redechius.

**Redechius** (Welsh: *Rhydderch mab Arthmael*) was a legendary king of the Britons.

He was preceded by Redon and succeeded by Samuil Penissel.

## v

**Pabo Post Prydain** (*supp. fl. before 500*) was a king from the Hen Ogledd or *Old North* of sub-Roman Britain.

Pabo "the Pillar of Britain" was driven out of the North in 460 and settled in Anglesey.

The genealogies give him a "royal line" of descendants as the father of Dunod Fawr, Sawyl Penuchel and *Ardun Benasgell*, and "a saintly one" as the grandfather of Deiniol, Asaph and Tysilio.

His daughter married **Maelgwn Gwynedd** *Cunedda's supposed grandson*

His son "**Samuel Chendisel**" (the Irish equivalent of *Pen-isel*) married **Deichter** daughter of King *Muireadhach Muinderg of Ulster*.

They had two sons:

**Saint Sanctan**, who became bishop of Cil-dá-les and founded

Kilnasantan in County Dublin, after traveling with his brother *Matóic Ailithir* to Ireland from Britain.<sup>293</sup>

Pabo must have been roughly the same age as Muiredach, whose death-date (after a reign of 24 years) is given as 489.

•

•

Saint **Deiniol** (died 584) was traditionally the first Bishop of Bangor in the Kingdom of Gwynedd,

Saint **Asaph** (or **Asaf**, **Asa**) was, in the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the first Bishop of St Asaph, i.e. bishop of the diocese of Saint Asaph.

<sup>292</sup> He should also not be confused with Eldol, Consul of Gloucester who lives generations later.

<sup>293</sup> The first author to record Pabo as the founder of St Pabo's Church, Llanbabo (at Llanbabo, Anglesey) was antiquarian Henry Rowlands (d. 1723), who writes that "Pabo, frequently called *Post Prydain*, i.e. the Support of Britain, for his great valour against the Picts and Scots, retired here [in Anglesey], and built his church at *Llan Babo*."

A stone cross was erected in the ruler's memory in the abbey's churchyard at the same time Bangor Cathedral was being built. Welsh poet Lewis Morris reports that the memorial cross was discovered there around 1650. The monument, dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, bears the carved image of a king and an accompanying inscription. The inscription is in part illegible but the following reading has been suggested:

*Hic iacet Pa[bo] Post Priid Co[nf Gr] ... [t]el [i]ma[ginem obtulit*

"Here lies Pabo the Upholder of Britain, Confessor, Gruffudd ab Ithel offered (this) image"

Saint **Tysilio** (died 640) was a Welsh bishop, prince and scholar, son of the reigning King of Powys, Brochwel Ysgithrog, maternal nephew of the great Abbot Dunod of Bangor Iscoed and an ecclesiastic who took a prominent part in the affairs of Wales during the distressful period at the opening of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

## vi

**Sawyl Penuchel** or **Ben Uchel** ("high-head", "arrogant"), also known as **Samuil Penisel** ("low-head", "humble"), son of *Cenau son of Mar* son of *Coel Hênen* was a British king of the sub-Roman period,<sup>294</sup> who appears in old Welsh genealogies and the Welsh Triads.

He was the father of St. Asaph.

He is listed as one of the "Three Arrogant Men of the Island of Britain."

**Pir** was a legendary king of the Britons.

He was preceded by Samuil Penissel, and succeeded by Capoir.

**Capoir** was a legendary king of the Britons.

He was preceded by Pir and succeeded by his son Digueillus.

**Digueillus** (also Cligueillus or Eligueillus; Welsh: *Llefelys*) son of *Capoir* was a legendary king of the Brythons

He was a wise and modest ruler who cared greatly about the administration of justice among the Brythons.

He was preceded by his father King Capoir and succeeded by his son Heli.

## IX

**Beli Mawr** (Welsh for "**Beli the Great**"), also known as *Heli son of Digueillus and father of Lud, Cassivelaunus and Nennius* Beli and Dôn daughter of Mathonwy<sup>295</sup> were the parents of Arianrhod,

but the mother of Beli's other children - Caswallawn, Lludd Llaw Eraint, Llefelys, and Afallach.

and the father of Dôn's other children - Caswallawn, Lludd Llaw Eraint, Llefelys, and Afallach.

is not mentioned in the medieval Welsh literature.<sup>296</sup>

**Beli** as a Middle Welsh reflex of the Gaulish and Brittonic theonym

**Belenus** (also attested as a personal name), derived from an Old Celtic name *Belgius* or *Bolgios*, borne by one of the chieftains who led the Gallic invasion of Macedonia in 280–279 BCE.

This great leader *Belgius* came to be regarded as the namesake and ancestor of the powerful British and Gallic tribal group the **Belgae**, whence would have come the doctrine that Beli was the ancestor of tribal dynasties.

He is said to have held the throne for 40 years, after which he was succeeded by his son Lud (Llud).

## ii

**Lud**<sup>297</sup> (Welsh: *Lludd map Beli Mawr*) eldest son of Beli Mawr was a king of Britain in pre-Roman times -

<sup>294</sup> Sawyl was from the south Pennines area (the modern Peak District, a name which may date from its settlement by the Anglian Pecset).

<sup>295</sup> In certain medieval genealogies he is listed as the husband of Anna, cousin of the Virgin Mary.

<sup>296</sup> Several royal lines in medieval Wales traced their ancestry to Beli.

<sup>297</sup> Lud may be connected with the Welsh mythological figure **Lludd Llaw Eraint**, earlier Nudd Llaw Eraint, cognate with the Irish **Nuada Airgetlám**,

Lludd fab Beli, who founded London, succeeded his father to the throne,  
and shortly thereafter helped his brother Llefelys marry the king's daughter of France.

Lud's reign is notable for the building of cities and the refortification of Trinovantum (London), which he especially loved.  
"London" as deriving from "*Caer Lud*," or Lud's Fortress.  
When he died, he was buried at Ludgate.  
His two sons, Androgeus and Tenvantius, were not yet of age, so he was succeeded, in turn, by his brother Cassibelanus.

Lludd had an additional brother named Llefelys, who became king of France while Lludd ruled in Britain.  
During Lludd's reign three great plagues befell Britain, but he was able to overcome them with the advice of his brother.

iii

**Llefelys**<sup>298</sup> (Middle Welsh orthography *Lleuelys*, *Lleuvelys*, *Llefelis*) *father of Heli and grandfather of Lud, Cassibellaunus, and Nennius* was king of France while his brother Lludd is king of Britain.

Lludd must soon request aid from Llefelys when Britain is beset by three menaces:  
the **Coraniaid**,<sup>299</sup> a mysterious people characterized by a sense of hearing so acute that they can hear any word the wind touches, making action against them impossible; a terrible scream that is heard every May Eve, terrifying the people and causing pregnant women to miscarry; and the continual disappearance of the provisions of the king's court.

With the help of a long horn that muffles their conversation, Lludd asks his brother Llefelys for advice on the problem. Llefelys provides his brother with solutions to each problem.

The Coraniaid are said to have settled near the Humber where they joined the Romans and Saxons against the Britons.  
Llefelys advises Lludd to mix a potion of crushed insects that will destroy the Coraniaid... but harmless to the Britons.  
Lludd crushes up the insects and calls a meeting of all his people and all the Coraniaid, then throws the concoction over the whole crowd, thereby killing the Coraniaid without harming his people.  
He saves some of the insects for breeding in case the plague ever returns to Britain

The scream, he reveals, comes from two dragons fighting, so Lludd must set a trap for them and bury them beneath **Dinas Emrys**.<sup>300</sup>

a king of the **Tuatha Dé Danaan**, and the Brittonic god **Nodens**. However, he was a separate figure in Welsh tradition and is usually treated as such  
<sup>298</sup> The tale appears in the *Red Book of Hergest* and the *White Book of Rhydderch*, the source texts for the *Mabinogion*, and embedded into various versions of the *Brut y Brenhinedd*, the Welsh adaptation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*.

In the Welsh *Brut y Brenhinedd*, Geoffrey's Heli son of Cligueillus becomes Beli son Manogan, a figure already known to Welsh audiences due to the influence of the 9<sup>th</sup>-century *Historia Brittonum*. Beli is the father of Lludd, Caswallawn, and Nennwy, and Llefelys is added as a fourth son. As such Cligueillus/Llefelys may have been displaced from his position as Beli's father once the well-known figure of Beli was chosen to replace the otherwise unknown Heli.

<sup>299</sup> The name *Coraniaid* appears to be related to the Welsh word *corrach* (plural *corachod*), translated as "dwarf" and its adjective form *corachaidd*, translated as "stunted" or "dwarfish"

<sup>300</sup> Dinas Emrys (Welsh: fortress of Ambrosius) is a rocky and wooded hillock near Beddgelert in Gwynedd, north-west Wales. Rising some 250 ft above the floor of the Glaslyn river valley, it overlooks the southern end of Llyn Dinas in Snowdonia.

The final problem is caused by an enchanter who puts Lludd's court to sleep;  
Lludd must defeat him in combat.  
Lludd makes good use of his brother's advice and overcomes each obstacle.

X

**Cassivellaunus**<sup>301</sup> *younger son of Beli Mawr* was a historical British tribal chief who led the defence against Julius Caesar's second expedition to Britain in 54 BC. He led an alliance of tribes against Roman forces, but eventually surrendered after his location was revealed to Julius Caesar by defeated Britons.

He appears as a usurper, who seizes the throne of Britain while the rightful king, **Bran the Blessed**, was at war in Ireland. Using a **magic cloak** which rendered him invisible, he killed the seven stewards Bran has left in charge, while the eighth, Bran's son **Caradog**, dies of bewilderment at the sight of a disembodied sword killing his men.

After his conquest of Gaul, Julius Caesar set his sights on Britain, and sent a letter to Cassibelanus demanding tribute. Cassibelanus refused, citing the Britons' and Romans' common Trojan descent (*see Brutus of Britain*), and Caesar invaded at the Thames Estuary.

Despite Cassivellaunus' harrying tactics, designed to prevent Caesar's army from foraging and plundering for food, Caesar advanced to the Thames. The only fordable point was defended and fortified with sharp stakes, but the Romans managed to cross it.

Caesar overcame Cassivellaunus' defence of a river crossing by means of an armoured elephant.<sup>302</sup>

Cassivellaunus had previously been in near-constant conflict with his neighbors, as was typical of the British tribes in this period, and had recently brought down **King Imanuentius of the Trinovantes**,<sup>303</sup> the most powerful Celtic tribe in pre-Roman Britain of south-eastern Britain in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.

Imanuentius, *eldest son of the legendary king Lud*, was killed by the warlord Cassivellaunus, and his son **Mandubracius**<sup>304</sup> also known as **Androgeus**, who fled to the protection of Caesar in Gaul.

ii

When Lud died,

Little remains of the Iron Age hillfort or castle structures that once stood here, save its stone ramparts and the base of a keep. Some believe the castle was erected by Llewelyn the Last to guard the road to the mountain pass of Snowdon.

<sup>301</sup> His name in Common Brittonic, \**Cassiellaunos*, comes from Proto-Celtic \**kassi-* "passion, love, hate" (alternately, "long hair", or "bronze") + \**uelna-mon-* "leader, sovereign"

<sup>302</sup> This claim may derive from a confusion with the Roman conquest of 43 AD,<sup>1</sup> when Claudius is supposed to have brought elephants to Britain.

<sup>303</sup> Variant spellings include **Inianuvetus**, **Inianuvetus** and **Imannuetius**.

<sup>304</sup> The original form of Imanuentius' name may have been \**Mannuētios*- and the Welsh mythological figure **Manawydan** may derive from an earlier \**Mannuētiagnos*, "son of Mannuetios."

In Middle Welsh versions of Geoffrey's *Historia*, and in the Welsh Triads, he appears as **Afarwy**.

### **Androgeus (Mandubracius) and his brother Tenvantius**

(Tasciovanus) sons of *Imantuennius* were still too young to rule, so the throne went to their uncle Cassibelanus.

Androgeus was made Duke of Trinovantum (London) and Kent, and participated in the defence of Britain against Julius Caesar - and Tenvantius was made Duke of Cornwall.

Cassivellaunus dismissed most of his army and resorted to guerilla tactics, relying on his knowledge of the territory and the speed of his chariots.

During the fighting, Cassibelanus' brother **Nennius of Britain**, called **Nynniaw**, third son of Heli and brother of Lud and Cassibelanus (and of Llefelys), embodying the fighting spirit of the Britons, fought alongside Cassibelanus when Caesar invaded.

Nennius and his nephew Androgeus, led the troops of Trinovantum (London) and Canterbury, encountering Caesar's own troops, and Nennius faced Caesar in single combat. Caesar struck Nennius a blow to the head, and he sustained a severe head wound, but his sword got stuck in Nennius' shield - and he was forced to retreat when Nennius' friends came to his aid - a humiliation that led to Caesar's withdrawal and inspired rebellion in France.

When the two were separated in the mêlée, Nennius threw away his own sword and attacked the Romans with Caesar's, killing many, including the tribune Labienus.<sup>305</sup> "Everyone whom Nennius struck with the sword either had his head chopped off or else was so wounded as Nennius passed that he had no hope of ever recovering."

Cassibelanus' celebrations were muted by Nennius' death from his head wound.

He was buried with the sword he took from Caesar, which had a poisoned tip and was named **Crocea Mors (Yellow Death)**.

The Britons held firm, and that night Caesar fled back to Gaul.

Fifteen days after his battle with Caesar, Nennius died of his head wound, and was buried at London (the "City of the Trinovantes"), near the North Gate.

An "inspirational lesson for future British people to defend their country from foreign invasion."

*iii*

Two years later, Caesar invaded again with a larger force. Cassibelanus, forewarned, had planted stakes beneath the waterline of the Thames which gut Caesar's ships, drowning thousands of men. The Romans were once again quickly put to flight.

After Caesar's first two invasions were repelled, the leaders of the Britons gathered for a celebration in Trinovantum to thank the gods for their victory with many **animal sacrifices** and celebrate with **sporting events** and **games**.

**Cuelinus** nephew of Androgeus wrestled with Hirelgas Cassibelanus' nephew and killed him in a dispute over the result.

Cassibelanus demanded Androgeus hand over his nephew for trial, but fearing the king's intentions,

Androgeus refused, offering to try him in his own court.

Cassibelanus made war on Androgeus, who appealed to Caesar for help.

He gave hostages, including his own son **Scaeva**, as proof of his intentions, and Caesar invaded a third time.

Caesar invades a third time, landing at Richborough. As Cassibelanus' army met Caesar's, Androgeus attacked

Cassibelanus from the rear with five thousand men.

His line broken, Cassibelanus retreated to a nearby hilltop. Between them, Androgeus and Caesar forced Cassibelanus to submit and agree to pay tribute to Rome.

After two days siege, Androgeus appealed to Caesar to offer terms. Cassibelanus agreed to pay tribute of three thousand pounds of silver, and he and Caesar became friends.

Cassibelanus was a great lover, who competed with Caesar over the beautiful *Fflur*.

He is named as one of the Three Golden Shoemakers of the Island of Britain

in relation to his trip to Rome seeking his love disguised as a shoemaker.

He abducted Fflur from Caesar in Gaul, killing 6000 Romans, and Caesar invaded Britain in response - Caesar's love for her was costly

Caesar spent the winter in Britain.

When he finally returned to Rome to fight the civil war against Pompey, Androgeus went with him, never to return.

Six years later, Cassibelanus dies and was buried in York.

Tenvantius succeeded as king of Britain.

*iv*

Cassivellaunus then led the British defence against the Romans, but the Trinovantes betrayed the location of his fortress to Caesar, who proceeded to besiege him there.

**Five British tribes:** the Cenimagni, the Segontiaci, the Ancalites, the Bibroci and the Cassi, surrendered to Caesar and revealed the location of Cassivellaunus' stronghold, thought to be at Wheathampstead, which Caesar proceeded to put under siege.

Cassivellaunus managed to get a message to the **four kings of Kent**: Cingetorix, Carvilius, Taximagulus and Segovax, to gather their forces and attack the Roman camp on the coast, but the Romans defended themselves successfully, capturing a chieftain called **Lugotorix**.

On hearing of the defeat and the devastation of his territories, Cassivellaunus surrendered.

The terms were mediated by **Commius**, Caesar's Gallic ally. Hostages were given and a tribute agreed.

As part of the terms of Cassivellaunus' surrender, Mandubracius was installed as king of the Trinovantes, and Cassivellaunus undertook not to make war against him. All this achieved, Caesar returned to Gaul where a poor harvest had caused unrest.

The Roman legions did not return to Britain for another 97 years.

**XI**

<sup>305</sup> In the Tudor and Jacobean eras Nennius became an emblem of British patriotism.

**Tasciovanus** (Tenvantius) was a historical king of the Catuvellauni tribe before the Roman conquest of Britain. He appears to have become king of the Catuvellauni ca. 20 BC,<sup>306</sup> ruling from Verlamion (*the site of modern-day St Albans*). He is believed to have moved the tribal capital to that site from an earlier settlement, *near modern-day Wheathampstead*. He died ca. AD 9, succeeded by his son Cunobelinus, who ruled primarily from Camulodunum. Another son, Epaticcus, expanded his territory westwards into the lands of the Atrebates.

## XII

**Cunobeline**<sup>307</sup> took power around 9 AD, minting coins from both Camulodunum (Colchester, capital of the Trinovantes) and Verlamion (later the Roman town of Verulamium, *now modern St Albans*), capital of the Catuvellauni. Cunobelinus had three sons, Adminius, Togodumnus and Caratacus, and a brother, Epaticcus.

**Epaticcus** expanded his influence into the territory of the **Atrebates** in the early 20s AD, taking the Atrebatic capital **Calleva** (*Silchester*) by about 25. He continued to expand his territory until his death in about 35, when Caratacus took over from him and the Atrebates recovered some of their territory. Adminius, judging by his coins, had control of Kent.

**Adminius, Amminius or Amminus son of Cunobelinus**, was ruler of the **Catuvellauni**, a tribe of Iron Age Britain. His name can be interpreted as Celtic *\*ad-mindios*, "to be crowned."

Cunobelinus had maintained friendly relations with the Roman Empire, and it has been speculated that the elderly king had lost control to an anti-Roman faction led by his other sons, Togodumnus and Caratacus, who may have been instrumental in forcing Adminius out of power. Alternatively, his fall may have been the result of a revolt of the **Cantiaci** against Catuvellaunian rule. Adminius was deposed and exiled by his father c. 39 or 40.

Yea - in ca. 40 he was banished from Britain by his father and sought refuge on continental Europe with a small group of followers and surrendered to the Romans.

Emperor Caligula treated this as if the entire island [of Britain] had submitted to him.

Amminus may have persuaded Caligula that Britain was vulnerable to attack and that an invasion would be an even more famous victory for him.

<sup>306</sup> For a brief period ca. 15–10 BC he issued coins from Camulodunum (Colchester), apparently supplanting Addedomarus of the Trinovantes. After this he once again issued his coins from Verlamion, now bearing the legend RICON, for *\*Rigonos*, Brythonic for "great/divine/legitimate king". Some of his coins bear other abbreviated names such as "DIAS." "SEGO" and "ANDOCO": these are generally considered to be the names of co-rulers or subordinate kings, but may instead be mint-marks.

<sup>307</sup> **Cunobeline** (or **Cunobelini**, from Latin *Cunobelinus*, derived from Greek *Kynobellinus*, Κυνοβελλίνος) was a king in pre-Roman Britain from the late first century BC until the 40s AD. He appears to have controlled a substantial portion of south-eastern Britain, and is called "King of the Britons" (*Britannorum rex*) by Suetonius.

Cunobeline appears in British legend as **Cynfelyn** (Welsh), **Kymbelinus** (medieval Latin) or **Cymbeline**, as in the play by William Shakespeare. His name is a compound made up of *cuno-* (hound) and *Belenos* (the god Belenus).

It is further likely that the capture of the British prince was the germ of Caligula's initiative to launch an invasion of Britain. Caligula prepared an invasion of Britain, but the invasion never happened because of Caligula's famous eccentricity and was abandoned in farcical circumstances, Caligula ordering his soldiers to attack the waves and gather seashells from Gaulish beaches as **war trophies** as the **spoils of victory**.

Caligula presented this relatively minor event as a great victory over the foreign tribes of Britain and even penned an extravagant report which he insisted be read to the Roman senate.

In any case, Rome's refusal to return the fugitive Adminius to his father was one of the contributory factors to growing anti-Roman sentiment in Britain, which necessitated Claudius' successful invasion of that land in AD 43.

Cunobelinus died some time before 43.<sup>308</sup>

Caratacus completed the conquest of the Atrebates, and their king, **Verica son of Commius**, fled to Rome, providing the new emperor, Claudius, with a pretext for the conquest of Britain.

Caratacus and Togodumnus led the initial resistance to the invasion. The "**Bodunni**," a tribe who were tributary to the Catuvellauni, changed sides and supported the Romans.<sup>309</sup>

• • •  
**Verica** (early 1st century AD) appears to be a ruler of the Atrebates tribe, a British client king of the Roman Empire in the years preceding the Claudian invasion of 43 AD. He succeeded his elder brother **Eppillus** as king in about AD 15, reigning at **Calleva Atrebatum**, *today called Silchester*. He was recognized as *rex* by Rome and appears to have had friendly trade and diplomatic links with the empire.

His territory was pressed from the east by the Catuvellauni, led by **Epaticcus** brother of Cunobelinus, who conquered Calleva in about 25 AD. After Epaticcus' death ca. 35 AD Verica regained some territory, but **Caratacus son of Cunobelinus** took over and conquered the entire kingdom some time after 40 AD.

"**Bericus**" (almost certainly Verica) was expelled from Britain around this time during a revolt. Demands by the Britons that Rome return "certain deserters."

As *rex*, Verica was nominally an ally of Rome,<sup>310</sup> so his exile gave Claudius an excuse to begin his invasion.

After the invasion, Verica may have been restored as king, but this is not attested in the historical or archaeological record. In any case a new ruler for the region, **Cogidubnus - infer**, soon appeared.

<sup>308</sup> The Lexden Tumulus on the outskirts of Colchester has been suggested as his tomb (although the earlier Trinovantian king Addedomarus is another candidate for its occupant).

<sup>309</sup> This is probably a misspelling of the Dobunni of Gloucestershire, indicating that Cunobelinus' hegemony extended as far as the West Country. <sup>310</sup> Verica's relationship with Rome has been used to argue for the site of the Roman invasion of Britain as being along the south coast to assist him, rather than being at the traditional spot at Richborough in Kent.

Cogidubnus may have been an heir of Verica who by this time would have been very elderly indeed.

ii

**Togodumnus** (d. AD 43) *son of Cunobelinus* was a historical king of the British Catuvellauni tribe at the time of the Roman conquest.

*He can probably be identified with the legendary British king Guiderius - infer.*

He led the fight against the Romans alongside his brother, but was killed early in the campaign.

He had sided with the Romans and is one-and-the-same person as the client-king **Tiberius Claudius Cogidubnus**.

He *probably* succeeded his father to the kingship of the Catuvellauni, who were the dominant kingdom in the south-east of Britain at this time.

Their territory took in the lands of several other nations, including their neighbours the Trinovantes, and *possibly* the Dobunni further west.

He had two notable brothers, Adminius<sup>311</sup> and Caratacus.

In Cunobelinus' later days Adminius gained control of the Cantiaci in Kent, but was driven from Britain in 40 AD, seeking refuge with the Roman emperor **Caligula**. Caligula planned an invasion of Britain in response, but called it off at the last minute.

Caratauc map Cinbelin map Teuhant *also known as Caratacus son of Cunobelinus son of Tasciovanus* following in the footsteps of his uncle **Epaticcus**<sup>312</sup> or Epaticcu (d. c. AD 35), *brother of King Cunobelinus of the Catuvellauni, a tribe of Iron Age Britain.*

He completed the conquest of the Atrebates - a Belgic tribe of Gaul and Britain before the Roman conquests - the main rival to the Catuvellauni, in the early 40s.

Togodumnus led the initial resistance to the invasion alongside Caratacus, but was falsely reported killed after the battle on the Thames. The Roman commander **Aulus Plautius**<sup>313</sup> then dug in at the Thames and sent word for Claudius to join him for the final march on the Catuvellaunian capital, **Camulodunum** (Colchester), previously the seat of his father Cunobelinus.

The resistance became fiercer as the Britons tried to avenge Togodumnus' defeat, and Plautius needed the emperor's help to complete the conquest;

<sup>311</sup> **Adminius, Amminius or Amminus** was a son of Cunobelinus, ruler of the Catuvellauni, a tribe of Iron Age Britain. His name can be interpreted as Celtic \*ad-mindios, "to be crowned."

<sup>312</sup> Coins bearing his name begin to appear in the northern lands of the neighbouring Atrebates tribe and their capital, Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester), probably fell to him around AD 25. It is likely that Epaticcus was permitted to govern the area by his brother as part of the Catuvellaunian hegemony that was expanding across south eastern Britain at the time.

<sup>313</sup> He began the Roman conquest of Britain in 43, and became the first governor of the new province, serving from 43 to 47.

Little is known of Aulus Plautius' early career. It was previously believed that he was involved in the suppression of a **slave revolt in Apulia**, probably in 24, alongside **Marcus Aelius Celer**. However, the "A-PLAVTIO" of the inscription is now associated with Aulus' father. He was **suffect consul** for the second half of 29, and held a provincial governorship, *probably* of Pannonia, in the early years of Claudius' reign: another inscription shows he oversaw the building of a road between Trieste and Rijeka at this time.

however, as Claudius was no military man and in the end spent only sixteen days in Britain, it is likely the Britons were already as good as beaten.

Leadership passed to Caratacus, who took the fight outside Roman-controlled territory and remained at large until AD 51.

iii

"Caratauc map Cinbelin map Teuhant" (i.e. "Caratacus son of Cunobelinus son of Tasciovanus")<sup>314</sup> was a first-century British chieftain of the Catuvellauni tribe, who led the British resistance to the Roman conquest.



"Caractacus before the Emperor Claudius at Rome"  
18th-century print by an unknown artist

Before the Roman invasion Caratacus was associated with the expansion of his tribe's territory. His apparent success led to Roman invasion, nominally in support of his defeated enemies.

He resisted the Romans for almost a decade, mixing **guerrilla warfare** with **set-piece battles**,

but was unsuccessful in the latter.

After his final defeat he fled to the territory of **Queen Cartimandua**, who captured him and handed him over to the Romans.

He was sentenced to death as a military prisoner, but made a speech before his execution that persuaded the Emperor Claudius to spare him.<sup>315</sup>

<sup>314</sup> **Caratacus** (Brythonic \*Caratācos, Middle Welsh *Caratawc*; Welsh *Caradog*; Greek *Kapάτακος*; variants Latin *Caractacus*, Greek *Kαράκης*). Caratacus does not appear in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* (1136), although he appears to correspond to Arviragus, the younger son of Kymbelinus, who continues to resist the Roman invasion after the death of his older brother **Guiderius**. In Welsh versions his name is **Gweirudd son of Cynfelyn** and his brother is called Gwydyr; the name **Arviragus** is taken from a poem by Juvenal.

<sup>315</sup> The legendary Welsh character **Caradog ap Bran** and the legendary British king **Arvirargus** may be based upon Caratacus. Caratacus's speech to Claudius has been a common subject in art.

Based on coin distribution Caratacus appears to have been the protégé of his uncle Epaticcus, who expanded Catuvellaunian power westwards into the territory of the Atrebates.

After Epaticcus died about 35 A.D., the Atrebates, under Verica, regained some of their territory, but it appears Caratacus completed the conquest - Verica was ousted, fled to Rome and appealed to the emperor Claudius for help. This was the excuse used by Claudius to launch his invasion of Britain in the summer of 43 AD

Cunobelinus had died some time before the invasion. Caratacus and his brother Togodumnus led the initial defence of the country against Aulus Plautius' four legions, thought to have been around 40,000 men, primarily using guerrilla tactics. They lost much of the south-east after being defeated in two crucial battles, the **Battle of the River Medway** and the **Battle of the River Thames**. Togodumnus was defeated but survived, and was later appointed by the Romans as a friendly king over a number of territories, becoming the loyal king referred to by Tacitus as Cogidubnus or Togidubnus... and the Catuvellauni's territories were conquered. Their stronghold of Camulodunon was converted into the first Roman colony in Britain, **Colonia Victricensis**.

We next hear of Caratacus leading the Silures and Ordovices of Wales against Plautius' successor as governor, **Publius Ostorius Scapula**.<sup>316</sup>

Finally, in 51, Scapula managed to defeat Caratacus in a set-piece battle somewhere in Ordovician territory (see the **Battle of Caer Caradoc**), capturing Caratacus' wife and daughter and receiving the surrender of his brothers. Caratacus himself escaped, and fled north to the lands of the Brigantes (*modern Yorkshire*) where the Brigantian queen, **Cartimandua**, handed him over to the Romans in chains, a **war prize**, presumably to be killed after a **triumphal parade**.

This was one of the factors that led to two Brigantian revolts against Cartimandua and her Roman allies, once later in the 50s and once in 69, led by Venutius, who had once been Cartimandua's husband.

[Caratacus] resorted to the ultimate hazard, adopting a place for battle so that entry, exit, everything would be unfavourable to Rome and for the better to his own men, with steep mountains all around, and, wherever a gentle access was possible, he strewed rocks in front in the manner of a rampart. And in front too there flowed a stream with an unsure ford, and companies of armed men had taken up position along the defenses.

Legends place Caratacus' last stand at either Caer Caradoc *near Church Stretton* or British Camp in the Malvern Hills, but with the capture of Caratacus, much of southern Britain from the Humber to the Severn was pacified and garrisoned throughout the 50s.

Although a captive, Caratacus was allowed to speak to the Roman senate.

Caratacus says that his stubborn resistance made Rome's glory in defeating him all the greater:

If the degree of my nobility and fortune had been matched by moderation in success, I would have come to this City as a friend rather than a captive, nor would you have disdained to receive with a treaty of peace one sprung from brilliant ancestors and commanding a great many nations. But my present lot, disfiguring as it is for me, is magnificent for you. I had horses, men, arms, and wealth: what wonder if I was unwilling to lose them? If you wish to command everyone, does it really follow that everyone should accept your slavery? If I were now being handed over as one who had surrendered immediately, neither my fortune nor your glory would have achieved brilliance. It is also true that in my case any reprisal will be followed by oblivion. On the other hand, if you preserve me safe and sound, I shall be an eternal example of your clemency

He made such an impression that he was pardoned and allowed to live in peace in Rome.



Caratacus at the Tribunal of Claudius at Rome  
Andrew Birrell (after Henry Fuseli) (1792)

After his liberation Caratacus was so impressed by the city of Rome that he said

"And can you, then, who have got such possessions and so many of them, covet our poor tents?"

### XIII

#### Cartimandua

**Cartimandua**<sup>317</sup> or **Cartismandua** (reigned c. AD 43 – c. 69) was a 1<sup>st</sup> century queen of the Brigantes,<sup>318</sup> a Celtic people living in what is now northern England. She came to power around the time of the Roman conquest of Britain, and formed a large tribal agglomeration that became loyal to Rome.

<sup>316</sup> **Publius Ostorius Scapula** (died 52) was a Roman statesman and general who governed Britain from 47 until his death, and was responsible for the defeat and capture of Caratacus.

<sup>317</sup> Her name may be a compound of the Common Celtic roots \**carti-* "chase, expel, send" and \**mandu-* "pony."

<sup>318</sup> The **Brigantes** were a Celtic tribe who in pre-Roman times controlled the largest section of what would become Northern England.



*Caratacus, King of the Silures, delivered up to Ostorius, the Roman General, by Cartimandua, Queen of the Brigantes*

print by F. Bartolozzi, British Museum

Her rule over the Brigantes may have already been established when the Roman emperor Claudius began the organized conquest of Britain in AD 43:

she may have been one of the eleven "kings" who Claudius' triumphal arch says surrendered without a fight  
If not,  
she may have come to power after a revolt of a faction of the  
Brigantes was defeated by **Publius Ostorius Scapula** in 48.

Of "illustrious birth," she *probably* inherited her power, as she appears to have ruled by right rather than through marriage.

She and her husband, Venutius were loyal to Rome and "defended by Roman arms."

**Venutius** was a 1<sup>st</sup> century king of the Brigantes in northern Britain at the time of the Roman conquest.

Some have suggested he may have belonged to the Carvetii, a tribe that probably formed part of the Brigantes confederation.

In 51 the British resistance leader **Caratacus** was defeated by **Publius Ostorius Scapula** in Wales,

he fled north and sought sanctuary with Cartimandua - but "treacherous" Cartimandua handed him over to the Romans in chains.

While the Brigantes were nominally an independent kingdom, Cartimandua and Venutius were loyal to Rome and were "defended by Roman power."

Having given Claudius the greatest exhibit of his triumph, Cartimandua was rewarded with great wealth.

However, after the capture of Caratacus, Venutius became the most prominent leader of resistance to the Roman occupation.

Cartimandua was sexually improprietary and *apparently* tired of him and divorced Venutius... replacing him with his armour-bearer, **Vellocatus** - a common soldier - a member of the servant class, rather than a noble - elevating him to kingship.

whom she elevated to the kingship in Venutius' place. "The royal house was immediately shaken by this disgraceful act" and many aristocrats would not accept a former servant as their king.

**Vellocatus** was a first-century king of the Brigantes tribe of northern Britain.

The former king Venutius was able to gather followers, becoming an important figure in the resistance to Roman occupation. In 57, Cartimandua had seized his brother and other relatives and held them hostage.

Venutius staged two revolts against Cartimandua, first in the mid-50s, which was defeated by the Romans, *and again in 69, this time successfully.*

Initially, Venutius sought only to overthrow his ex-wife, only later turning his attention to her Roman protectors.

Venutius made war against her and then against her Roman protectors.

He built alliances outside the Brigantes, and during the governorship of **Aulus Didius Gallus**<sup>319</sup> (52–57) he staged an invasion of the kingdom.

The Romans had anticipated this and defended their client queen, sending some cohorts to defend Cartimandua.

The fighting was inconclusive until **Caesius Nasica**<sup>320</sup> arrived with a legion, the **IX Hispana**, and Venutius' revolt was defeated.

Cartimandua retained the throne thanks to prompt military support from Roman forces

She was not so fortunate in 69.

Taking advantage of Roman instability during the year of four emperors, Venutius staged another revolt,<sup>321</sup> again with help from other nations.

Cartimandua appealed for troops from the Romans, who were only able to send auxiliaries.

Cartimandua was rescued by the Romans and evacuated, leaving Venutius in control of a kingdom at war with Rome.

After this, Cartimandua disappears.

What happened to Venutius after the accession of Vespasian is not recorded.

## XIV

**Guiderius** (Welsh **Gwydr**) eldest son of Cymbeline was a legendary British king.<sup>322</sup>

He succeeded his father to the kingship of Britain.

Cymbeline had voluntarily paid tribute to Rome, but Guiderius refused to pay it.

The emperor Claudius responded by invading.

Claudius and his chief of staff, Lelius Hamo, landed at Portchester, entrenching themselves there while besieging the city.

Guiderius conscripted all the men of Britain against Claudius and marched south to meet him in battle.

<sup>319</sup> **Aulus Didius Gallus** was a Roman general and politician of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. He was governor of Britain between 52 and AD 57.

<sup>320</sup> He may have been the elder brother of **Quintus Petillius Cerialis** - a Roman general and administrator who served in Britain during **Boudica's rebellion** and who went on to participate in the civil wars after the death of Nero.

<sup>321</sup> This second revolt may have had wider repercussions: Tacitus says that **Vespasian**, once emperor, had to "recover" Britain. He also says, introducing the events of the year of four emperors, that Britain was abandoned having only just been subdued (although some think this is in reference to the consolidation of Agricola's later conquests in Caledonia (Scotland)).

<sup>322</sup> He can probably be identified as deriving from the historical Togodumnus.

The Britons clashed with the Romans and succeeded so well that the Roman army began retreated to their ships.

**Hamo**, *though*, put on British armour and began attacking his own army,  
urging the Britons to do likewise.

Because of this, Hamo was able to get close enough to Guiderius to strike him.

Guiderius died then or soon after and was succeeded by his brother **Arvirargus**,

who took over as king during the battle.

**Arvirargus** (*or Arviragus*) *son of the former king Kymbelinus* was a legendary, and possibly historical, British king of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

Arviragus was contemporary with the emperor Claudius (AD 41-54).

He and his brother Guiderius had been kidnapped in childhood by Belarius,

a nobleman wrongly banished by Cymbeline,  
and brought up in secret in Wales,  
but are reunited with their father and sister Imogen in time for the Roman invasion.



*Imogen*  
Herbert Gustave Schmalz

Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*

**Imogen** is princess of Britain, and the virtuous wife of the exiled **Posthumus**, whose praise of her moral purity incites Posthumus' acquaintance **Iachimo** to bet Posthumus that he can seduce her. When he fails, Iachimo hides in her bedchamber and uncovers her body while she sleeps, observing details of a mole on her breast which he then describes to Posthumus as proof that he had slept with her. Posthumus plots to kill his wife, but the designated killer reveals the plot to Imogen and advises her to hide; she escapes to the woods dressed as a man and falls in with a family who help her. Taking a drug, she falls into a coma and is presumed dead by the family, who cover her body and sing a song over her. When she wakes she finds the headless body of **Cloten**, a brutish character who had planned to rape her while wearing Posthumus' clothes, but had been killed in a fight with one of the men who took her in. She mistakes the headless body

for that of her husband. After the battle at the climax of the play she confronts Iachimo who confesses his lies. She is reunited with Posthumus, and her father (King Cymbeline), and discovers two of the men who took her in are actually her long lost brothers.

*ii*

Arviragus puts on his brother's armour and leads the army of the Britons against the Romans.

When he learnt that Claudius and his commander, Hamo, have fled into the woods,

Arviragus followed them until they reached the coast.

The Britons killed Hamo as he tried to flee onto a ship  
*and the place is named Southampton after him.*

Claudius was able to reassemble his troops elsewhere and he besieged Portchester until it fell to his forces.

Following Hamo's death,  
Arviragus sought refuge at Winchester,  
but Claudius followed him there with his army.  
The Britons broke the siege and attacked the Romans,  
but Claudius halted the attack and offered a treaty.  
In exchange for peace and tribute with Rome,  
Claudius offered Arviragus his own daughter in marriage.  
They accept each other's terms  
and Arviragus aided Claudius in subduing Orkney and other northern lands.

In the following spring, Arviragus wed Claudius' daughter,<sup>323</sup> Genvissa,  
and names the city of Gloucester after her father.

• • •  
**Venissa (Genissa, Genvissa, Genuissa)** was a daughter of the Roman Emperor Claudius,  
whom he gave in marriage to the British king Arviragus once he had submitted to Rome.  
She was very beautiful,  
and so enchanted Arviragus that he preferred her company to anyone else's.

He founded Gloucester,  
supposedly named after Claudius, in her honour.  
When Arviragus fell out with Rome  
and Vespasian was sent to enforce a reconciliation,  
Venissa acted as mediator between them.

*iii*

Following the wedding,  
Claudius left Britain in the control of Arviragus.  
In the years following Claudius' departure,  
Arviragus rebuilt the cities that had been ruined  
and became feared by his neighbours.  
This caused him to halt his tribute to Rome,  
forcing Claudius to send Vespasian with an army to Britain.  
As Vespasian prepared to land,  
such a large British force stood ready *that* he fled to another port,  
Totnes,  
where he set up camp.

Once a base was established,  
Vespasian marched to Exeter and besieged the city.

<sup>323</sup> It is in any case inconceivable that a daughter, even an illegitimate daughter, of a Roman emperor could be given in marriage to a barbarian without attracting comment. Nonetheless, she and her husband, identified with the historical Caratacus, appear in many uncritical genealogies originating in the Tudor period.

Arvirargus meets him in battle there  
and the fight is stalemated.

The following morning, Queen Genvissa mediated peace between the two foes.

Vespasian returned to Rome  
and Arvirargus ruled the country peacefully for some years.  
When he finally died, he was buried in Gloucester, the city he built  
with Claudius.  
He was succeeded by his son, Marius.

## XV

**Marius son of Arvirargus** was a legendary king of the Britons during the time of the Roman occupation of Britain,  
who ruled after his father's death.  
He ruled wisely in the time when the Picts first came to Britain.

A fleet of ships under the leadership of **Sodric** came from **Scythia** and landed in Albany.  
Once there, they began to destroy the lands and Marius was forced to react.  
Following numerous battles, Marius killed Sodric and **set up a stone** there to remember that triumph.  
In addition, that land became known as **Westmorland** after him.  
In respect for the people he defeated, he gave them a small portion of Albany called **Caithness** to live in.  
Marius refused, however, to give them women to marry so the Picts fled to Ireland and took wives there.  
Marius established close ties with Rome and good diplomacy through tribute and respect of the Roman citizens in Britain.  
He followed the laws of his ancestors and ruled justly.  
When he died, he was succeeded by his son, Coilus.

ii

**Coilus son of Marius** was a legendary king of the Britons during the time of the Roman occupation of Britain,  
who ruled after his father's death.

Coilus was brought up in Rome and favoured the company of Romans in Britain.  
Throughout his reign he paid Rome its tribute without question.  
In Britain, he allowed the nobles peace and granted them large gifts.  
He was succeeded by his only son, St Lucius.



King Lucius (middle) from the East Window in York Minster  
The other kings maybe Aurelius Ambrosius and Arthur.

## XVI

**St. Lucius son of Coilus son of Marius Arvirargus son of king Kymbelinus (Cymbeline)** was a legendary 2<sup>nd</sup> century King of the Britons  
and is traditionally credited with introducing Christianity into Britain.<sup>324</sup>

Lucius was the son of the benevolent King Coilus and ruled in the manner of his father.

Hearing of the miracles and good works performed by Christian disciples,  
he wrote to **Pope Eleutherius**<sup>325</sup> declaring an intention to convert to Christianity.

ii

**St. Fagan** (Medieval Latin: *Faganus*; Welsh: *Ffagan*), also known by other names including **Fugatius**, was possibly a legendary 2<sup>nd</sup> century bishop and saint, said to have been sent by the pope to answer King Lucius' request for baptism and conversion to Christianity.

**Deruvian** (Medieval Latin: *Deruvianus*), also known by several other names including **Damian**, was possibly a legendary 2<sup>nd</sup> century bishop and saint, said to have been sent by the pope to answer King Lucius; request for baptism and conversion to Christianity.

• •

Eleutherius sent two missionaries, Fuganus and Duvianus, who baptized the king and established a successful Christian order throughout Britain.

They converted the commoners and flamens, turned pagan temples into churches, and established dioceses and archdioceses where the flamens had previously held power.

The pope was pleased with their accomplishments, and Fuganus and Duvianus recruited another wave of missionaries to aid the cause.

After Eleutherius granted Lucius' request, the Britons followed their king in conversion and maintained the Christian faith until the **Diocletianic Persecution of 303**.<sup>326</sup>

<sup>324</sup> There is no contemporary evidence for a king of this name, and modern scholars believe that his appearance in the *Liber Pontificalis* is the result of a scribal error. However, for centuries the story of this "first Christian king" was widely believed, especially in Britain, where it was considered an accurate account of Christianity among the early Britons. During the English Reformation, the Lucius story was used in polemics by both Catholics and Protestants; Catholics considered it evidence of papal supremacy from a very early date, while Protestants used it to bolster claims of the primacy of a British national church founded by the crown.

<sup>325</sup> **Pope Eleuterius** (died 189), also known as **Eleutherius**, was the Bishop of Rome from c. 174 to his death in 189. (The Vatican cites 171 or 177 to 185 or 193). According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, he was a Greek born in Nicopolis in Epirus, Greece

<sup>326</sup> The **Diocletianic** or **Great Persecution** was the last and most severe Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. In 303, the Emperors Diocletian, Maximian, Galerius, and Constantius issued a series of edicts rescinding the legal rights of Christians and demanding that they comply with traditional Roman religious practices. Later edicts targeted the clergy and ordered all inhabitants to sacrifice to the Roman gods (a policy known as **universal sacrifice**). The

## XVII

**Septimius Severus** (Latin: *Lucius Septimius Severus Augustus*; (11 April 145 – 4 February 211), also known as **Severus**, was **Roman emperor** from 193 to 211.

Severus was born in **Leptis Magna** in the Roman province of Africa. As a young man he advanced through the **cursus honorum** - the customary succession of offices - under the reigns of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. Severus seized power after the death of **Emperor Pertinax** in 193 during the **Year of the Five Emperors**.

After deposing and killing the incumbent emperor **Didius Julianus**, Severus fought his rival claimants, the generals **Pescennius Niger** and **Clodius Albinus**. Niger was defeated in 194 at the **Battle of Issus** in Cilicia.

Later that year Severus waged a short punitive campaign beyond the eastern frontier, annexing the **Kingdom of Osroene** as a new province.

Severus defeated Albinus three years later at the **Battle of Lugdunum** in Gaul.

After consolidating his rule over the western provinces, Severus waged another brief, more successful war in the east against the Parthian Empire, sacking their capital **Ctesiphon** in 197 and expanding the eastern frontier to the **Tigris**.

Furthermore, he enlarged and fortified the *Limes Arabicus* in **Arabia Petraea**.

In 202, he campaigned in Africa and Mauretania against the **Garamantes**; capturing their capital **Garama** and expanding the *Limes Tripolitanus* along the southern frontier of the empire.



Septimius Severus at Glyptothek, Munich.

persecution varied in intensity across the empire - weakest in Gaul and Britain, where only the first edict was applied, and strongest in the Eastern provinces. Persecutory laws were nullified by different emperors at different times, but Constantine and Licinius' **Edict of Milan** (313) has traditionally marked the end of the persecution.

Late in his reign he traveled to Britain, strengthening **Hadrian's Wall** and reoccupying the **Antonine Wall**. In 208 he invaded Caledonia (*modern Scotland*), but his ambitions were cut short when he fell fatally ill in late 210.

Severus died in early 211 at Eboracum (*today York, England*), succeeded by his sons Caracalla and Geta. With the succession of his sons, Severus founded the **Severan Dynasty**, the last dynasty of the empire before the **Crisis of the Third Century**.

• • •

After Severus' death the Romans wanted to make Geta king of Britain, but the Britons preferred Bassianus because he had a British mother. The two brothers fought a battle in which Geta was killed and Bassianus succeeded to the throne.  
*He ruled until he was betrayed by his Pictish allies and overthrown by Carausius, who was called a Briton, rather than the historically much later Menapian Gaul that he actually was.*

*iii*

Septimius Severus was already in his early thirties at the time of his first marriage.

In about 175, he married a woman from **Leptis Magna** named **Paccia Marciana**.

It is likely that he met her during his tenure as legate under his uncle. Marciana's name reveals that she was of Punic or Libyan origin *but virtually nothing else is known of her*.

Marciana and Severus had two daughters but their existence is nowhere else attested.

It appears that the marriage produced no surviving children, despite lasting for more than ten years

Marciana died of natural causes around 186. Septimius Severus was now in his forties and still childless. Eager to remarry, he began enquiring into the horoscopes of prospective brides. He heard of a woman in Syria who had been foretold that she would marry a king, and therefore Severus sought her as his wife.

This woman was an *Emesan Syrian* woman named **Julia Domna**. Her father, **Julius Bassianus**, descended from the royal house of **Samsigeramus and Sohaemus**, and served as a high priest to the local cult of the sun god Elagabal. Domna's older sister was **Julia Maesa**, later grandmother to the future emperors **Elagabalus** and **Alexander Severus**.

Bassianus accepted Severus' marriage proposal in early 187, and the following summer he and Julia were married. The marriage proved to be a happy one and Severus cherished his wife and her political opinions, since she was very well-read and keen on philosophy. Together, they had two sons,

Lucius Septimius Bassianus (later nicknamed Caracalla, *b. 4 April 188*)

and Publius Septimius Geta (*b. 7 March 189*).

*iv*

**Julia Domna**

**Julia Domna**, also known as **Julia Domma** (170 – 217)

youngest daughter of the high-priest Gaius Julius Bassianus and her eldest sister was **Julia Maesa** -

from an Arab family of the city of Emesa (Homs today) - was a member of the Severan dynasty of the Roman Empire, Empress and wife of Roman Emperor Lucius Septimius Severus and mother of Emperors Geta and Caracalla.

Julia was famous for her prodigious learning as well as her extraordinary political influence.

Julia was from a Arab family of the city of Emesa (*Homs today*). She was the youngest daughter of the high-priest **Gaius Julius Bassianus** and her eldest sister was **Julia Maesa**.

Her ancestors were Priest Kings of the famous temple of Elagabalus (syr. *Ilāh hag-Gabal*).

The family had enormous wealth and was promoted to Roman senatorial aristocracy.

Before her marriage, Julia inherited the estate of her paternal great-uncle **Julius Agrippa**, a former leading Centurion.



Giulia Domna, moglie di Settimio Severo, su busto non pertinente.  
Musei Vaticani, Museo Chiaramonti - Braccio Nuovo; inv. 2210.

**Julius Agrippa** was a Syrian nobleman from the Royal family of Emesa who lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century - a direct descendant of the Emesene Roman Priest-Client King

**Sohaemus of Emesa**, also known as Gaius Julius Sohaemus.

He was the brother of a Julius

and the paternal uncle of **Julius Bassianus**, the Emesene High Priest of El-Gebal - the Syrian Sun God.

Furthermore, he was the paternal great-uncle to Domna and her elder sister Julia Maesa - *infer*.

ii

In the late 180s, Julia married future Emperor Septimius Severus - *supra*, usually considered to be of Punic background.

The marriage proved to be a happy one, and Severus cherished his wife and her political opinions.

She was very well-read and keen on philosophy.

They had two sons,

Lucius Septimius Bassianus (Caracalla) in 188 and Publius Septimius Geta in 189.

Because of her love of philosophy, Julia protected philosophers and helped philosophy to flourish in Rome.

When Severus became emperor in 193 (known as "**Year of the Five Emperors**"),

he had a civil war waiting for him, against rivals such as **Pescennius Niger** and **Clodius Albinus**.

Julia accompanied him in his campaigns in the East, an uncommon event at a time when women were expected to wait in Rome for their husbands.

Nevertheless, she remained with the emperor and among the several proofs of affection and favour are the minting of coins with her portrait and the title *mater castrorum* (mother of the camp).

As empress, Julia was often involved in intrigues and had plenty of political enemies, who accused her of treason and adultery.

None of these accusations was proven.

Severus continued to favour his wife and insisted on her company in the campaign against the Britons that started in 208.

When Severus died in 211 in Eboracum (*York*), Julia became the mediator between their two sons, Caracalla and Geta, who were to rule as joint emperors, according to their father's wishes expressed in his will.

The two young men were never fond of each other and quarreled frequently.

Geta was murdered by Caracalla's soldiers in the same year.

Caracalla was now sole emperor, but his relations with his mother were difficult,

as attested by several sources,

*probably* because of his involvement in Geta's murder.

Nevertheless, Julia accompanied Caracalla in his campaign against the Parthian empire in 217.

**Gaius Julius Bassianus** or **Bassus**, also known as **Julius Bassianus** (flourished second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, died 217) was a Syrian High Priest of Arab descent from north Arabia.

Bassianus was a high priest for the **Temple of the Sun**, which was adored in a shape of a **black stone**.<sup>327</sup>

<sup>327</sup> A temple called the **Elagabalium** was built on the east face of the Palatine Hill, to house the holy stone of the Emesa temple, a **black conical meteorite** worshipped as though it were sent from heaven; on it there are some small projecting pieces and markings that are pointed out, which the people would like to believe are a rough picture of the sun, because this is how they see them.

**Elagabalus** forced senators to watch while he danced around his deity's **altar** to the sound of **drums and cymbals**, and at each **summer solstice** celebrated a great festival, popular with the masses because of food distributions, during which he placed the holy stone on a chariot adorned with gold and jewels, which he paraded through the city:

A six horse chariot carried the divinity, the horses huge and flawlessly white, with expensive gold fittings and rich ornaments. No one held the reins, and no one rode in the chariot; the vehicle was escorted as if the god himself were the charioteer. Elagabalus ran backward in front of the chariot, facing the god and holding the horses reins. He made the whole journey in this reverse fashion, looking up into the face of his god

Herodian's description strongly suggests that the Emesene cult was inspired by the **Babylonian Akitu-festival** - a spring festival in ancient Mesopotamia marking the cutting of barley in spring. In Babylonian religion it came to be dedicated to Marduk's victory over Tiamat.

The Emperor also tried to bring about a union of Roman and Syrian religion under the supremacy of his deity, which he placed even above

### The Aramaean Sun God in Aramaic is *El-Gebal*.

The name is the Latinized form of the Semitic *Ilāh hag-Gabal*, which derives from *Ilāh* "god" and *gabal* "mountain" (compare Arabic: جبل *jabal*), resulting in "the God of the Mountain," the Emesene manifestation of the deity.

The sun god **Heliogabalus** (Elagabalus), the patron god venerated in Emesa (*modern Homs*) in the Roman province of Syria.<sup>328</sup>

Bassianus was a member of the **Royal family of Emesa** (*modern Homs, Syria*).

The Royal Family was a part of the local Syrian Aramaean aristocracy and was a client kingdom of the Roman Empire. The beginning of his priesthood is unknown but by 187, he was a high priest at Emesa.

Bassianus was a son of a Julius and his paternal uncle was Julius Agrippa, who served as a **Primipilaris** (a former leading Centurion).

Future emperor Lucius Septimius Severus had visited Emesa, based on a promising horoscope that he would find his future wife in Syria.

Bassianus introduced Severus to his two daughters. Bassianus' wife is unknown.

His elder daughter **Julia Maesa**<sup>329</sup> was married to a Syrian noble **Gaius Julius Avitus Alexianus**

and they had two daughters **Julia Soaemias Bassiana** and **Julia Avita Mamaea**.

His younger daughter **Julia Domna** was not married.

Severus and Domna, married not so long after.

Domna bore Severus two sons,

Lucius Septimius Bassianus (Caracalla, 4 April 188-8 April 217) and Publius Septimius Geta (7 March 189-19 December 211).

Caracalla and Geta would become future Roman Emperors and heirs to their father.

iii

### Julia Maesa

**Julia Maesa** (ca. 7 May 165 – ca. 3 August 226) was a Roman citizen and daughter of Gaius Julius Bassianus, priest of the sun god Heliogabalus, the patron god of Emesa (*modern Homs*) in the Roman province of Syria.

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Jupiter, and to which he assigned either Astarte, Minerva or Urania, or some combination of the three, as wife. The most sacred relics from the Roman religion were transferred from their respective shrines to the Elagabalium, including "the emblem of the Great Mother, the *fire of Vesta*, the Palladium, the shields of the Salii, and all that the Romans held sacred." He reportedly also declared that Jews, Samaritans and Christians must transfer their rites to his temple so that it "might include the mysteries of every form of worship."

After the Emperor was killed in 222, his religious edicts were reversed and the cult of Elagabalus returned to Emesa

<sup>328</sup> The cult of the deity spread to other parts of the Roman Empire in the second century. For example, a dedication has been found as far away as Woerden, in the modern-day Netherlands.

The cult statue was brought to Rome by the **Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus**, who, before his accession, was the hereditary high priest at Emesa and was commonly called Elagabalus after the deity. The Syrian deity was assimilated with the Roman sun god known as **Sol Invictus** ("the Undefeated Sun").

<sup>329</sup> Julia Maesa prevailed upon her grandson, the emperor Elagabalus to adopt another grandson, the son of Julia Avita Mamaea, who took the name **Alexander Severus** and eventually became emperor. Bassianus is a possible descendant of princess **Drusilla of Mauretania** and could be an ancestor to **Syrian Queen Zenobia of Palmyra**.

Grandmother of both the Roman emperors Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, she figured prominently in the ascension of each to the title at the age of fourteen.

Like her younger sister Julia Domna, she was among the most important women to exercise power behind the throne in the Roman empire. Following the death of Caracalla, Julia Maesa rescued the **Severan Dynasty** from the usurper Macrinus.

Julia Maesa was married to Syrian noble **Gaius Julius Avitus Alexianus**

by whom had two daughters

**Julia Soaemias Bassiana** and **Julia Avita Mamaea**

each one mother of an emperor.

Following the accession to the throne of her brother-in-law **Lucius Septimius Severus**,

Julia Maesa moved to Rome to live with her sister.

After the murder of her nephew, the emperor **Caracalla** and the **suicide** of **Julia Domna**,

she was compelled to return to Syria.

The new emperor Macrinus did not proscribe her - but allowed her to keep her money.

Once back in Syria and possessed of ample funds, Maesa engaged in a plot to overthrow Macrinus and place one of her grandsons, **Elagabalus son of Julia Soaemias**, in his place.

In order to legitimize this pretension, mother and daughter fomented the rumor

that the 14-year-old boy was Caracalla's illegitimate son.

The two Julias were successful, mainly because Macrinus was of an obscure origin

without the proper political connections and Elagabalus became emperor.

For her loyalty and support, Elagabalus honored Julia Maesa with the title **Augusta avia Augusti** (Augusta, grandmother of Augustus). The teenager proved to be a disaster as emperor, scorning Roman values with **both religious and sexual scandals**.

He took the liberty in marrying a **Vestal Virgin** (she was one of a rumored five wives during his brief four years reign), Julia Maesa decided to promote instead her fourteen-year-old grandson **Alexander Severus**.

She convinced Elagabalus to adopt Alexander as his heir.

Elagabalus was murdered shortly afterwards by the Praetorian Guard alongside his mother.

Both were thrown into the Tiber river in contempt after being dragged from the palace through the streets. This event followed a rumor that Alexander had died.

Julia Maesa died on an uncertain date around 226.

Like her sister Domna before her, she was deified.

iv

**Geta** (*Publius*, or *Lucius*, *Septimius Geta Augustus*; 7 March 189 - 26 December 211), was a Roman emperor who ruled with his father Septimius Severus and his older brother Caracalla from 209, when he was named **Augustus** like his brother who had held the title since 198.

Severus died in 211, and although he intended for his sons to rule together, they proved incapable of sharing power

culminating with the murder of Geta in December of that year.

v

Geta younger son of Septimius Severus by his second wife Julia Domna was born in Rome, at a time when his father was only a provincial governor at the service of Emperor Commodus.

During the **campaign against the Britons** in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, **imperial propaganda** promoted the image of a happy family that shared the responsibilities of rule. Septimius Severus entrusted Julia Domna with the role of counselor, Caracalla acted as the emperor's second in command, and administrative and bureaucratic duties were Geta's responsibility. In reality, however, the rivalry and antipathy between the brothers did not abate... and although he'd intended for his sons to rule together.



Publius Septimius Geta  
Marble, Roman artwork, ca. 208 CE.

When Septimius Severus died in Eboracum in early 211, Caracalla and Geta were proclaimed joint emperors and returned to Rome, but they proved incapable of sharing power.

The brothers wished to split the empire in two halves. By the end of 211, the situation had become unbearable. Caracalla tried unsuccessfully to murder Geta during the **festival of Saturnalia**.

Finally, on December 19<sup>th</sup>, Caracalla had his mother arrange a peace meeting with his brother in his mother's apartments, and then had him murdered in her arms by centurions.

Following Geta's assassination, Caracalla ordered his brother's **name to be removed from all inscriptions**. The now sole emperor also took the opportunity to get rid of his political enemies, on grounds of conspiracy. Around 20,000 men and women were killed or proscribed during this time.

Very few marble portraits attributable to Geta survive to date, presumably due to the very thorough **damnatio memoriae** which resulted in the erasing of his images. However Roman coins with his image are plentiful,

and can reflect how his father Septimius Severus and later Geta himself wanted him to be seen by the Roman people (and especially the Roman military).

On his coins Caracalla, who became Augustus in 197, was shown with a wreath of laurels, while Geta remained bareheaded until he himself became Augustus in 209

Between 209 and their father's death in February 211, both brothers were shown as equally mature young men with a short full beard, ready to take over the empire.

Between the death of Septimius Severus and the assassination of Geta,

Caracalla's portraits did not change, while Geta was depicted with a long beard with hanging hairs much like his father, a strong indication of Geta's efforts to be seen as the "true" successor of his father.

vi

During this trip, Caracalla was assassinated and succeeded (briefly) by Macrinus.

Julia chose to commit suicide after hearing about the rebellion, perhaps a decision hastened by the fact that she was suffering from breast cancer.

Her body was brought to Rome and placed in the *Sepulcrum C. et L. Caesaris* (perhaps a separate chamber in the Mausoleum of Augustus).

Later, however, both her bones and those of Geta were transferred by her sister Julia Maesa to the **Mausoleum of Hadrian**. She was later deified.<sup>330</sup>

## XVIII

**Caracalla** eldest son of Septimius Severus was the popular nickname of Marcus Aurelius Severus Antoninus Augustus (4 April 188 – 8 April 217), Roman emperor (AD 198–217).

Caracalla - "the common enemy of mankind" - reigned jointly with his father from 198 until Severus' death in 211.

For a short time Caracalla then ruled jointly with his younger brother Geta until Caracalla had Geta murdered later in 211.

Caracalla is remembered as one of the most notorious and unpleasant of emperors (according to the literate elite) because of the massacres and persecutions he authorized and instigated throughout the Empire.

Caracalla son of the later Emperor Septimius Severus and Julia Domna, of mixed Berber and Syrian descent, was born Lucius Septimius Bassianus in Lugdunum, Gaul (now Lyon, France).

Caracalla as not tall, but robust. He close-cropped his hair like that of a soldier, and had a pugnacious scowl - he emanated a threatening presence.

This rugged **soldier-emperor** iconic archetype was adopted by most of the following emperors who depended on the support of the troops to rule. Very different from the detached images of the **philosopher-emperors** who preceded him.

<sup>330</sup> If it were not for Julia, we would have very little information today about the legendary **Apollonius of Tyana**. It was at the behest of Julia that Philostratus wrote his now famous *Life of Apollonius*. Julia is thought to have died before Philostratus could finish his work of eight volumes.

**Caracalla a king of Britain**, referring to him by his actual name "Bassianus," rather than the nickname Caracalla.

ii

At the age of seven, his name was changed to Marcus Aurelius Septimius Bassianus Antoninus to create a connection to the family of the philosopher emperor Marcus Aurelius. He was later given the nickname *Caracalla*, which referred to the Gallic hooded tunic he habitually wore and which he made fashionable.

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Portrait of the emperor Caracalla from a statue reworked as a bust.

His father died in 211 at Eboracum (now York) while on campaign in northern Britain. Caracalla was present and was then proclaimed emperor by the troops along with his brother Publius Septimius Antoninus Geta. Caracalla suspended the campaign in Caledonia and soon ended all military activity, as both brothers wanted to be sole ruler thus making relations between them increasingly hostile. When they tried to rule the Empire jointly, they actually considered dividing it in halves, but were persuaded not to do so by their mother.

Then in December 211 at a reconciliation meeting arranged by their mother Julia Domna, Caracalla had Geta assassinated by members of the Praetorian Guard loyal to himself, leading to Geta dying in his mother's arms. Caracalla then persecuted and executed most of Geta's supporters and ordered a **damnatio memoriae** pronounced by the Senate against his brother's memory.

iii

Geta's image was simply removed from all coinage, paintings and statues, leaving a blank space next to Caracalla's.

Among those executed were his former cousin-wife **Fulvia Plautilla**, his unnamed daughter with Plautilla along with her brother and other members of the family of his former father-in-law **Gaius Fulvius Plautianus**.

Plautianus had already been executed for alleged treachery against emperor Severus in 205.

About the time of his accession, he ordered the Roman currency devalued, the silver purity of the denarius was decreased from 56.5% to 51.5%, the actual silver weight dropping from 1.81 grams to 1.66 grams – though the overall weight slightly increased. In 215 he introduced the *antoninianus*, a "double denarius" weighing 5.1 grams and containing 2.6 grams of silver – a purity of 52%.

iv

In 213, about a year after the murder of Geta, Caracalla left the capital and went north to the German frontier to deal with the **Alamanni** tribesmen who had broken through the *limes* in the *Agri Decumates*.

The Romans defeated the Alamanni in battle near the river Main, but failed to win a decisive victory over them.

After a peace agreement was brokered and a large bribe payment given to the invaders, the Senate conferred upon him the empty title of *Germanicus Maximus*.

He was also addressed by the surname *Alemannicus* at this time. The following year Caracalla traveled to the East, to Syria and Egypt never to return to Rome... spending the rest of his reign in the provinces.

He kept the Senate and other wealthy families in check by forcing them to construct, at their own expense, palaces, theaters, and places of entertainment throughout the periphery.

New and heavy taxes were levied against the bulk of the population, with additional fees and confiscations targeted at the wealthiest families.

v

After Caracalla concluded his campaign against the Alamanni it became evident that he was inordinately preoccupied with the Greek-Macedonian general and conqueror,

**Alexander the Great**.

He began openly mimicking Alexander in his personal style. In planning his invasion of the Parthian Empire, Caracalla decided to equip 16,000 men (more than three fully staffed legions) of his army as Macedonian style phalanxes, despite the Roman army having made the Phalanx an obsolete tactical formation.

This mania for Alexander went so far in that Caracalla visited Alexandria while preparing for his Persian invasion and persecuted philosophers of the Aristotelian school based on a legend that Aristotle had poisoned Alexander.

This was a sign that Caracalla was behaving in an erratic manner. But this mania for Alexander, strange as it was, was overshadowed by subsequent events in Alexandria.

When the inhabitants of Alexandria heard Caracalla's claims that he had killed Geta in self-defense, they produced a satire mocking this as well as Caracalla's other pretensions.

In 215, Caracalla savagely responded to this insult

by slaughtering the deputation of leading citizens who had unsuspectingly assembled before the city to greet his arrival, and then unleashed his troops for several days of looting and plunder in Alexandria - over 20,000 people were killed.

vi

While Caracalla was mustering and training troops for his planned Persian invasion, Julia remained in Rome, administering the empire. Julia's growing influence in state affairs was the beginning of a trend of Emperors' mothers having influence, which continued throughout the Severan dynasty.

vii

During his reign as emperor, Caracalla raised the annual pay of an average legionary to 675 denarii and lavished many benefits on the army which he both feared and admired, as instructed by his father Septimius Severus who had told both him and his brother Geta on his deathbed *always to mind the soldiers and ignore everyone else*. Caracalla did manage to win the trust of the military with generous pay raises and popular gestures, like marching on foot among the ordinary soldiers, eating the same food, and even grinding his own flour with them.

With the soldiers, "he forgot even the proper dignity of his rank, encouraging their insolent familiarity." "The vigour of the army, instead of being confirmed by the severe discipline of the camps, melted away in the luxury of the cities."

viii

Caracalla also commissioned one of Rome's last major architectural achievements - a large public bath-house (thermae) project in Rome - the second largest public baths ever built in ancient Rome, and the remains of the **Baths of Caracalla** are still one of the major tourist attractions of the Italian capital. The main room of the baths was larger than St. Peter's Basilica, and could easily accommodate over 2000 Roman citizens at one time. The bath house opened in 216, complete with libraries, private rooms and outdoor tracks. Internally it was lavishly decorated with gold-trimmed marble floors, columns, mosaics and colossal statuary.

ix

Caracalla's reign was also notable for the **Constitutio Antoniniana** (Latin: "Constitution [or Edict] of Antoninus") (also called the **Edict of Caracalla** or the **Antonine Constitution**), an edict issued in 212 granting **Roman citizenship** to all freemen throughout the Roman Empire - and all free women in the Empire were given the same rights as Roman women - which was done for the purposes of raising tax revenue, coupled with the debasement of the currency, needed to pay for the new pay raises and benefits conferred on the military. At the time aliens did not have to pay most taxes that were required of citizens, so although nominally Caracalla was elevating their legal status, he was more importantly expanding the Roman tax base.

Before 212,

for the most part only inhabitants of Italia held full Roman citizenship.

Colonies of Romans established in other provinces, Romans (or their descendants) living in provinces, the inhabitants of various cities throughout the Empire, and small numbers of local nobles (such as kings of client countries) held full citizenship also.

Provincials, on the other hand, were usually non-citizens, although many held the Latin Right (Latin: *ius Latii, Latinitas* or *ius latinum*) -

a civic status given by the Romans, intermediate between full Roman citizenship and non-citizen status (known as *peregrinus*), and extended originally to the people of Latium (the *Latini*)..

x

Caracalla pursued a series of aggressive campaigns in the east, designed to bring more territory under direct Roman control. He attempted to find pretexts for invading Parthia, culminating in a proposal of marriage between himself and the daughter of king **Artabanus V of Parthia**.

In 216, Caracalla tricked the Parthians into believing that he was sincere in his marriage and peace proposal, but then attacked the bride and guests at the wedding celebrations. Artabanus barely escaped. His daughter and many high ranking Parthians were massacred. The thereafter ongoing conflict and skirmishes became known as the **Parthian war of Caracalla**.

xi

While traveling from Edessa to continue the war with Parthia, he was assassinated while urinating at a roadside near Carrhae (now Harran in southern Turkey) on 8 April 217 (4 days after his 29th birthday), by **Julius Martialis**, an officer of his personal bodyguard.

*Martialis' brother had been executed a few days earlier by Caracalla on an unproven charge.*

Martialis was already resentful at not being promoted to the rank of centurion.

The escort of the emperor gave him privacy to relieve himself, and Martialis then ran forward and killed Caracalla with a single sword stroke.

While attempting to flee, the bold assassin was then quickly dispatched by a Scythian archer of the Imperial Guard.

Caracalla was succeeded by his Praetorian Guard Prefect, **Macrinus**, who was most probably responsible for having the emperor assassinated.



The Roman Empire during the reign of Caracalla.

## XIX

Marcus Aurelius Mausaeus Valerius **Carausius** (died 293) was a military commander of the Roman Empire in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. He was a Menapian from Belgic Gaul, who usurped power in 286, during the **Carausian Revolt**, declaring himself emperor in Britain and northern Gaul. He did this only 13 years after the **Gallic Empire of the Batavian Postumus** was ended in 273.

He held power for seven years, before being assassinated by his finance minister Allectus.

ii

Carausius was a Briton of humble origin, a Menapian who distinguished himself by his courage during Maximian's campaign against the **Bagaudae rebels** in northern Gaul in 286:

The **bagaudae** (also spelled **bacaudae**) were groups of peasant insurgents who arose during the **Crisis of the Third Century**, and persisted until the very end of the western Empire, particularly in the less-Romanized areas of Gallia and Hispania, where they were "exposed to the depredations of the late Roman state," and the great landowners and clerics who were its servants.

This success, and his former occupation as a pilot, led to his appointment to command the **Classis Britannica**, a fleet based in the English Channel - to defend Britain from barbarian attack, with the responsibility of eliminating Frankish and Saxon pirates who had been raiding the coasts of Armorica and Belgica. Once given the fleet, however, he sailed around Britain stirring up unrest, and raised an army against Bassanius, the historical Caracalla, *here a king of Britain*.

He was suspected of keeping captured treasure for himself, and of allowing pirates to carry out raids and enrich themselves before taking action against them, and Maximian ordered his execution.

In late 286 or early 287 Carausius learned of this sentence and responded by declaring himself Emperor in Britain and northern Gaul. His forces comprised not only his fleet, augmented by new ships he had built, and the three legions stationed in Britain, but a legion he had seized in Gaul, a number of foreign auxiliary units, a levy of Gaulish merchant ships, and **barbarian mercenaries** attracted by the prospect of booty.

Carausius was able to win support from the army when his command had been sea-based, and he was *perhaps* involved in an unrecorded victory in Britain, connected with Diocletian's assumption of the title **Britannicus Maximus** in 285, and signs of destruction in Romano-British towns at this time.

The campaign against the Bagaudae, however, was evidently land-based, and may have been responsible for Carausius' popularity with the army. Equally, if the accusations of larceny are true, he could perhaps have afforded to buy their loyalty.

iii

Maximian prepared an invasion of Britain in 288 or 289 to oust him,

but it failed due to bad weather, but Carausius claimed a military victory - hostilities were in vain thanks to Carausius' military skill, and peace was agreed.

Carausius began to entertain visions of legitimacy and official recognition.

He minted his own coins and brought their value into line with Roman issues as well as acknowledging and honouring **Maximian** and then **Diocletian**.<sup>331</sup>

iv

Carausius appealed to native British dissatisfaction with Roman rule; he issued coins with legends such as *Restitutor Britanniae* (Restorer of Britain) and *Genius Britanniae* (Spirit of Britain).

He also used coins for more sophisticated propaganda.<sup>332</sup>

He issued the first proper silver coins that had appeared in the Roman Empire for generations, knowing that good quality bullion coinage would enhance his

legitimacy and make him look more successful than Diocletian and Maximian.

Some of these silver coins bear the legend *Expectate veni*, 'Come long-awaited one' - recognized to allude to a line in the *Aeneid* by the Augustan poet Virgil, written more than 300 years previously.

He was trying to suggest that not only was he, Carausius, a kind of messianic new ruler, but was also showing his association with Roman culture rather than any kind of remote provincial culture.

• •

Carausius may have been responsible for the series of fortifications on both sides of the English Channel known as the **Saxon Shore**.

v

This situation continued until 293, when **Constantius Chlorus** (Constantius I),

now the western Caesar,

marched into Gaul and reclaimed it for the empire.

He isolated Carausius by besieging the port of Gesoriacum (*Boulogne-sur-Mer*),

and invading Batavia in the Rhine delta, securing his rear against Carausius' Frankish allies.

He could not yet mount an invasion of Britain until a suitable fleet could be built.

<sup>331</sup> Coinage is the main source of information about the rogue emperor; his issues were initially crude but soon became more elaborate and were issued from mints in Londinium, Rotomagus and a third site, possibly *Colonia Claudia Victricensis*.

<sup>332</sup> Some of the silver coins bear the legend RSR in the *exergue* (an area on a coin below the legend). This was considered a mystery for some time. Two Carausian medallions, now in the British Museum have also been found. One has RSR in the exergue; the other has INPCDA. Since 1998 these letters have been recognised as representing the sixth and seventh lines of the **Fourth Eclogue of Virgil**, which reads *Redeunt Saturnia Regna, Iam Nova Progenies Caelo Demittitur Alto*, meaning 'The Golden Ages are back, now a new generation is let down from Heaven above'. This poem was as famous in the Roman world as Shakespeare's works are today, so any educated reader would certainly have realized what the initials stood for (it was commonplace in antiquity to reduce slogans and phrases to abbreviations). No other Roman emperor in history ever made such an explicit reference to famous Roman literature. It is quite extraordinary that in a remote province like Britain a rebel emperor should utilise such a method to appeal to his public. He was claiming to represent a revival of traditional Roman virtues and the great traditions of the Empire as established by Augustus in the last decades of the first century BC, not in Rome but in Britain.

Nevertheless, Carausius' grip on power was fatally undermined. **Allectus**, whom he had put in charge of his treasury, assassinated him and assumed power himself. His reign would last only three years, after which he was defeated and killed by Constantius' subordinate **Julius Asclepiodotus**.

vi

**Allectus** (died 296) was a Roman-Britannic usurper-emperor in Britain and northern Gaul from 293 to 296.

Allectus was treasurer to Carausius, a Menapian officer in the Roman navy who had seized power in Britain and northern Gaul in 286. In 293 Carausius was isolated when the western Caesar, Constantius Chlorus, retook some of his Gallic territories, particularly the crucial port of **Bononia** (*modern Boulogne*), and defeated his Frankish allies in Batavia.

Allectus was an officer sent with three legions by the Romans to depose Carausius - the native British king.

*Allectus assassinated Carausius and assumed command himself.*

His reign has left little record, although his coin issues display a similar distribution to those of Carausius. They are found in north western Gaul, indicating that the recapture of Bononia did not spell the end of the rebel empire on that side of the English Channel.

vii

Constantius launched an invasion to depose him in September 296. His forces sailed in several divisions. Constantius led one division from Bononia, but seems to have been delayed by bad weather.

The praetorian prefect **Asclepiodotus** took a section of the fleet and the legions from **San Dun Sandouville** and oppidum *near Le Havre*, slipping past Allectus' fleet at the Isle of Wight taking advantage of **fog** to avoid Allectus' ships stationed at the Isle of Wight, and landed near Southampton Water - presumably in the vicinity of Southampton or Chichester - where they burnt their ships. Allectus' forces were forced to retreat from the coast, but were cut off by another of Constantius' divisions and defeated and killed Allectus near London - <sup>333</sup> him having removed all insignia in the hope that his body would not be identified.

A group of Roman troops, who had been separated from the main body by the fog during the channel crossing, caught up with the remnants of Allectus' men, mostly Franks, at Londinium (*London*), and besieged the rest of his forces in the city -

The Romans eventually surrendered on condition of safe conduct out of Britain, which Asclepiodotus was willing to grant;

but he massacred them - and their heads thrown into the river Galobroc, by his allies the **Venedoti**.

•  
viii

Constantius himself, *it seems*, did not reach Britain until it was all over, and his panegyrist claims he was welcomed by the Britons as a liberator.

**Julius Asclepiodotus** was a Roman praetorian prefect who served under Aurelian, Probus and Diocletian and was consul in 292.

In 296 he assisted the western Caesar Constantius Chlorus in re-establishing Roman rule in Britain following the illegal rules of Carausius and Allectus.

Asclepiodotus, a duke of Cornwall, was raised to the kingship in opposition to Allectus - a Roman who oppressed the people of Britain.

Asclepiodotus is *then* officially crowned king, and rules justly for ten years. However, his rule was contemporary with the **persecutions of Christians** under Diocletian, and the **martyrdom of Saint Alban**.

*In response to these atrocities, Coel Hêñ, duke of Colchester, led a revolt against him, killing him, and taking his crown.*

## XX

**Coel** (Old Welsh: *Coil*) or **Coel Hêñ** ("Coel the Old") *Godebog* (Old Welsh: *Guotepauc*), meaning "Protector" or "Shelterer," was a leader in Roman or Sub-Roman Britain and the progenitor of several kingly lines in the Hen Ogledd ("the Old North"), the Brittonic-speaking part of northern England and southern Scotland.

His line, collectively called the *Coeling*, included such noted figures as **Urien**, king of Rheged - "King Urien of Gorre" of later Arthurian legend and his son Owain mab Urien was later known as Ywain; **Gwallog ap Llaennog**, perhaps king of Elmet; the brothers **Gwrhi** and **Peredur** sons of Eliffer "of the great warband" (*cascord maur*); and **Clydno Eiddin** son of a certain Cinbelim or Cynfelyn son of Dunnagual Hen, an early ruler of Alt Clut (later known as Strathclyde), king of Eidyn or Edinburgh.

He was also considered to be the father-in-law of **Cunedda**, founder of Gwynedd in North Wales, by his daughter **Gwawl**.

*According to Welsh tradition the region of Kyle was named for Coel, and a mound at Coylton in Ayrshire is regarded as his tomb.*

*Coel may have been the last of the Roman Duces Britanniarum (Dukes of the Britons) who commanded the Roman army in northern Britain, and split his lands among his heirs after his death.*

ii

<sup>333</sup> Archaeology suggests that **Calleva**, formally Calleva Atrebatum ("Calleva of the Atrebates"), was the site of his defeat, was an Iron Age oppidum and subsequently a town in the Roman province of Britannia and the civitas capital of the Atrebates tribe. Its ruins are now known as **Silchester Roman Town** and are beneath and to the west of the Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin.

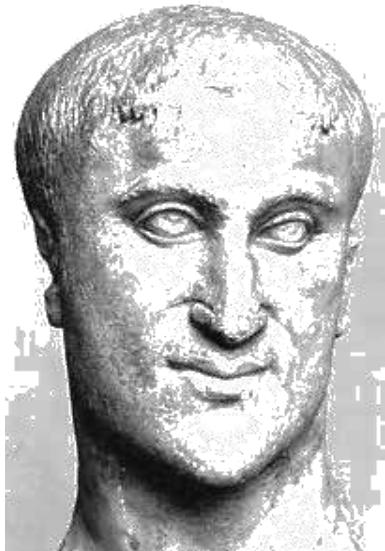
**Coel Hēn** father of Empress Saint Helena and therefore the grandfather of Constantine the Great grew upset with Asclepiodotus' handling of the **Diocletianic Persecution** and began a rebellion in his duchy of Caer Colun (Colchester). He met Asclepiodotus in battle and killed him, thus taking the kingship of Britain upon himself. Rome, apparently, was pleased that Britain had a new king, and sent senator **Constantius Chlorus** to negotiate with him. Afraid of the Romans, Coel met Constantius and agreed to pay tribute and submit to Roman laws as long as he was allowed to retain the kingship. Constantius agreed to these terms, but Coel died one month later. Constantius married Coel's daughter, **Helena**, crowned himself as Coel's successor and became king of Britain. *Helena subsequently gave birth to a son who became the Emperor Constantine the Great, giving a British pedigree to the Roman imperial line.*

## XXI

**Constantius I** (Latin: *Marcus Flavius Valerius Constantius Herculeius Augustus*; 31 March c. 250 – 25 July 306) was Roman Emperor from 293 to 306, commonly known as **Constantius Chlorus** (Greek, *Kōnstantios Khlōrós*, lit. "Constantius the Pale"). He was the father of Constantine the Great and founder of the Constantinian dynasty - and a king of the Britons.

In 289 political developments forced him to divorce Helena. He married Theodora, Maximian's daughter. They had six children:  
 Flavius Dalmatius (died 337), also known as **Dalmatius the Censor** - responsible for the security of the eastern borders of the realm;  
 Julius Constantius - a politician of the Roman Empire;  
 Hannibalianus - who married Constantine's elder daughter, Constantina, in 335, and was made *nobilissimus*;  
 Flavia Julia Constantia - given in marriage to his co-emperor Licinius - she bore a son, Valerius Licinianus Licinius II;  
 Anastasia - whose husband, Bassianus, a Roman senator, was found to be plotting against Constantine; and Eutropia.

As **Caesar**, he defeated the usurper Allectus in Britain and campaigned extensively along the Rhine frontier, defeating the Alamanni and Franks.



Constantius Chlorus

Constantius was sent to Britain by the Senate after **Asclepiodotus** (here a British king) was overthrown by Coel of Colchester. Coel submitted to Constantius and agreed to pay tribute to Rome, but died only eight days later.

Upon becoming **Augustus** in 305, Constantius launched a successful punitive campaign against the Picts beyond the Antonine Wall. However, Constantius died suddenly in Eburacum (York) the following year. His death sparked the collapse of the tetrarchic system of government inaugurated by the Emperor Diocletian.

*ii*

**Diocletian** divided the administration of the Roman Empire into two halves, a Western and an Eastern portion. Each would be ruled by an Augustus, supported by a Caesar. Both Caesars had the right of succession once the ruling Augustus died.

Constantius' first task on becoming Caesar was to deal with the Roman usurper Carausius who had declared himself emperor in Britannia and northern Gaul in 286

In late 293, Constantius defeated the forces of Carausius in Gaul, capturing Bononia. This precipitated the assassination of Carausius by his *rationalis Allectus*, who assumed command of the British provinces until his death in 296.

Constantius spent the next two years neutralizing the threat of the Franks who were the allies of Allectus, as northern Gaul remained under the control of the British usurper until at least 295.

He also battled against the Alamanni, achieving some victories at the mouth of the Rhine in 295.

Administrative concerns meant he made at least one trip to Italy during this time as well.

*iii*

Only when he felt ready (and only when Maximian finally came to relieve him at the Rhine frontier) did Constantius assemble two invasion fleets with the intent of crossing the English Channel. The first was entrusted to **Asclepiodotus**, Constantius' long-serving Praetorian prefect, who sailed from the mouth of the Seine, while the other, under the command of Constantius himself, was launched from his base at Bononia. The fleet under Asclepiodotus landed near the **Isle of Wight**, and his army encountered the forces of Allectus, resulting in the defeat and death of the usurper. Constantius in the meantime occupied London, saving the city from an attack by Frankish mercenaries who were now roaming the province without a paymaster. Constantius massacred all of them

*iv*

Constantius remained in Britannia for a few months, replaced most of Allectus' officers,

and the British provinces were *probably* at this time subdivided along the lines of Diocletian's other administrative reforms of the Empire.

The result was the division of Upper Britannia into **Maxima Caesariensis** and **Britannia Prima**, while **Flavia Caesariensis** and **Britannia Secunda** were carved out of Lower Britannia. He also restored **Hadrian's Wall** and its forts.

Later in 298, Constantius fought in the **Battle of Lingones** (*Langres*) against the Alamanni.

He was shut up in the city, but was relieved by his army after six hours and defeated the enemy.

He defeated them again at Vindonissa (*Windisch, Switzerland*), thereby strengthening the defenses of the Rhine frontier. In 300, he fought against the Franks on the Rhine frontier, and as part of his overall strategy to buttress the frontier, Constantius settled the Franks in the deserted parts of Gaul to repopulate the devastated areas.

Nevertheless, over the next three years the Rhine frontier continued to occupy Constantius' attention.

v

In 303, Constantius was confronted with the imperial edicts instituted by Diocletian dealing with the **persecution of Christians**. The campaign was avidly pursued by Galerius - a staunch opponent of Christianity, who noticed that Constantius was well-disposed towards the Christians, and who saw it as a method of advancing his career prospects with the aging Diocletian. Of the four Tetrarchs, Constantius made the least effort to implement the decrees in the western provinces that were under his direct authority, limiting himself to knocking down a handful of churches.

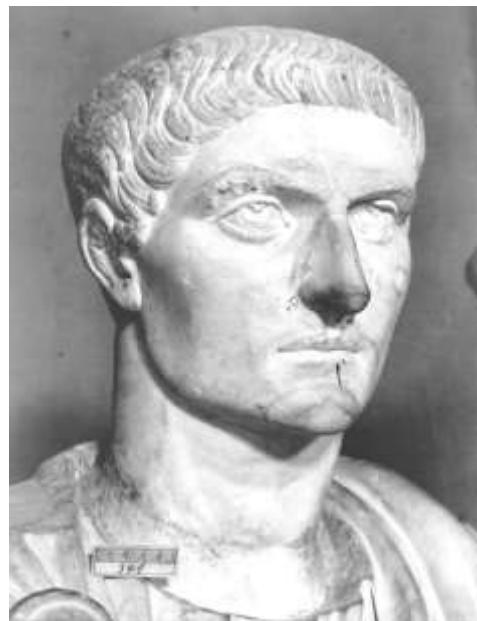
vi

Between 303 and 305, Galerius began maneuvering to ensure that he would be in a position to take power from Constantius after the passing of Diocletian.

In 305 Constantius crossed over into Britain, traveled to the far north of the island and launched a military expedition against the Picts, claiming a victory against them and the title *Britannicus Maximus II* by 7 January 306.

After retiring to Eboracum (*York*) for the winter, Constantius had planned to continue the campaign, but on 25 July 306, he died. As he was dying, Constantius recommended his son to the army as his successor; consequently Constantine was declared emperor by the legions at York.

## XXII



Constantine the Great

**Constantine the Great** (Latin: *Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus Augustus*; 27 February 272 – 22 May 337), also known as **Constantine I** or **Saint Constantine** (in the Orthodox Church as **Saint Constantine the Great, Equal-to-the-Apostles**), was a Roman Emperor from 306 to 337 - and a king of the Britons.

Constantine was the son of Flavius Valerius Constantius, a Roman army officer, and his consort **St. Helena** or **St. Helen** (Latin: *Flavia Iulia Helena Augusta*; c. 250 – c. 330) - an important figure in the history of Christianity and the world due to her major influence on her son and her own contribution in placing Christianity at the heart of Western Civilization.

**St. Helena** is traditionally credited with a pilgrimage to Syria Palaestina, during which she is claimed to have discovered the **True Cross**.

## XXIII

**Eudaf Hen** (Eudaf "the Old") or **Octavius** or **Outham Senis** (Outham "the Old") was a King of the Britons<sup>334</sup> and the father of **Elen Luyddog** and **Conan Meriadoc**. *Eudaf was a direct ancestor of King Arthur.*

Eudaf was a half-brother to Constantine I, who has become King of the Britons following the death of his father Constantius. Eventually Constantine was made Roman Emperor, requiring him to leave Britain in the hands of a proconsul. Octavius, then duke of the Gewissei tribe, rebelled against Roman rule, killing the proconsul and proclaiming himself king.

Constantine responded by sending three legions to Britain under the command of his great-uncle **Trahern** brother of the late King Coel.

<sup>334</sup> Modern Welsh **Eudaf** (Middle Welsh **Eudav**, early Old Welsh **Out(h)am**) comes from Brittonic \**Aui-tamos*<sup>[2]</sup> meaning "Very Strong in Will." The name **Octavius** in Geoffrey of Monmouth *Historia* is a corruption and faux-Latinization of Old Welsh/Breton **Outham** (later spelled Eudaf).

**Trahern** (Welsh: *Trahaearn*) brother of **Coel Hêr** was a Roman senator and a legendary King of the Britons.. He was sent by Emperor **Constantine I** to restore Britain to Roman rule during the usurpation of Octavius (Eudaf).

Trahern landed at "Kaerperis" and captured it, forcing Octavius to conscript all the island into the army to combat the Roman legions. Octavius engaged Trahern in a field outside Winchester and was victorious. Trahern fled to Alba (*Scotland*) and pillaged the land, and Octavius came after him. They meet at **Westmorland**, and Octavius was defeated and forced out of Britain. Trahern took the crown himself, while Octavius sought aid from **King Gunbert of Norway**.

In Britain, supporters of Octavius ambushed Trahern and killed him near London, allowing Octavius to return to Britain. Once arrived, he scattered the Roman forces and retook the throne of Britain, gaining an incredible amount of wealth and prestige.

Eventually, Caradoc, Duke of Cornwall, suggested that Octavius marry his only daughter **Helen** to the new Roman Emperor, **Maximianus (Magnus Maximus)**, thereby uniting the British and Roman crowns. Octavius agreed, and Caradoc's son Mauricius was sent to Rome with the proposal. However Octavius' nephew Conan Meriadoc (elsewhere his son) opposed the union, and nearly attacked the arriving Maximianus. Finally Caradoc restored the peace, and Octavius abdicates the throne in favor of Maximianus.

### *The Dream of Macsen Wledig*

Macsen Wledig, the Emperor of Rome, dreamt one night of a lovely maiden in a wonderful, far-off land. Awakening, he sent his men all over the earth in search of her. With much difficulty they found the maiden in a rich castle in Caernarfon (*Wales, Segontium*), and lead the Emperor to her. Everything he found was exactly as in his dream, including the presence of her young, *gwyddbwyl*-playing brothers **Cynan** (Conan Meriadoc) and **Gadeon**, as well as her father, king **Eudaf Hen son of Caradawc (Caradog ap Bran) son of the British king Brân the Blessed**.

The maiden, whose name is Helen or *Elen Llwyddawc*, accepts and loves him. Because Elen is found a virgin, Macsen gives her father sovereignty over the island of Britain and orders three castles built for his bride. In Macsen's absence, a new emperor seizes power and warns him not to return. With the help of men from Britain led by **Cynan** and **Gadeon**, Macsen marches across Gaul and Italy and recaptures Rome. In gratitude to his British allies, Macsen rewards them with a portion of Gaul that becomes known as Brittany.

### **XXIV**

**Magnus Maximus** (Latin: *Flavius Magnus Maximus Augustus*, Welsh: *Macsen Wledig*) (ca. 335 – August 28, 388) was Western Roman Emperor from 383 to 388.

In 383 as commander of Britain, he usurped the throne against emperor **Gratian**; and through negotiation with emperor **Theodosius I** the following year he was made emperor in Britannia and Gaul – while Gratian's brother **Valentinian II** retained Italy, Pannonia, Hispania, and Africa. In 387 Maximus' ambitions led him to invade Italy, resulting in his defeat by Theodosius I at the **Battle of the Save** in 388. His death marked the end of direct imperial presence in Northern Gaul and Britain.

*ii*

Maximus was born in Gallaecia, on the estates of **Count Theodosius (the Elder)**, to whom he was a nephew – a nephew of Coel Hêr through Coel's brother Ioelinus, and king of the Britons following the death of Eudaf Hen.

His dignity was offended when lesser men were promoted to high positions.

Maximus was a distinguished general, who served under Count Theodosius in Africa in 373 and on the Danube in 376. It is likely he also may have been a junior officer in Britain in 368, during the quelling of the **Great Conspiracy**. Assigned to Britain in 380, he defeated an incursion of the Picts and Scots in 381.

### **The Great Conspiracy**

The **Great Conspiracy** was a year-long state of war and disorder that occurred in Roman Britain near the end of the Roman occupation of the island.

A *barbarica conspiratio* that capitalized on a depleted military force in the province brought about by Magnentius' losses at the **Battle of Mursa Major** after his unsuccessful bid to become emperor.

**Magnentius** (Latin: *Flavius Magnentius Augustus*; r. 303 – 11 August 353) was a usurper of the Roman Empire from 350 to 353.

Magnentius quickly attracted the loyalty of the provinces in Britannia, Gaul, and Hispania, in part because he proved to be far more tolerant towards both Christians and Pagans. His control on Italia and Africa was applied through the election of his men to the most important offices. However, the short-lived revolt of **Nepotianus**, a member of the Constantinian dynasty, showed Magnentius that his status as emperor was to be consolidated against the members of that dynasty.

*ii*

Assigned to Britain in 380, Maximus defeated an incursion of the Picts and Scots in 381. The western emperor Gratian had become unpopular because of perceived favouritism toward Alans over Roman citizens. The Alans are an Iranian-speaking people (see also Sarmatians and Ossetians)

who were early adopters of Christianity and migrated both east and west from their homeland.

In 383 Maximus was proclaimed emperor by his troops.  
He went to Gaul to pursue his imperial ambitions, taking a large portion of the British garrison troops with him.

Maximus' bid for imperial power in 383 coincides with the last date for any evidence of a Roman military presence in Wales, the western Pennines, and the fortress of Deva.

Coins dated later than 383 have been found in excavations along Hadrian's Wall, suggesting that troops were not stripped from it, as was once thought. Maximus left Britain not only with all of its Roman troops, but also with all of its armed bands, governors, and the flower of its youth, never to return

[ iii ]

iv

After he became emperor of the Western Roman Empire, Maximus returned to Britain to campaign against the Picts and Scots (i.e., Irish), probably in support of Rome's long-standing allies the Damnonii, Votadini, and Novantae (*all located in modern Scotland*).

While there he likely made similar arrangements for a formal transfer of authority to local chiefs - the later rulers of Galloway, home to the Novantae, would claim Maximus as the founder of their line, the same as did the Welsh kings

He withdrew from Britain with all its military force, slew Gratianus the king of the Romans, and obtained the sovereignty of all Europe. Unwilling to send back his warlike companions to their wives, families, and possessions in Britain, he conferred upon them numerous districts from the lake on the summit of Mons Iovis, to the city called Cant Guic, and to the western Tumulus, that is Cruc Occident.

These are the Armorican Britons, *and they remain there to the present day*.

In consequence of their absence, Britain being overcome by foreign nations, the lawful heirs were cast out, till God interposed with his assistance.

Octavius wanted to wed his daughter to such a powerful half-Roman-half-Briton and to give the kingship of Britain, as a dowry, to that husband, so he sent a message to Rome offering his daughter to Maximian.

v

Caradoc, the Duke of Cornwall, had suggested and supported the marriage between Octavius' daughter and Maximian. Maximian accepted the offer and left Rome for Britain.

Maximian gathered an army as he sacked Frankish towns along the way. He invaded Clausentum (*modern Southampton*) unintentionally and nearly fought the army of the Britons under **Conan Meriadoc** before agreeing to a truce.

Following further negotiations,

Maximian was given the kingship of Britain and Octavius retired. Five years into his kingship, Magnus Maximus assembled a vast fleet and invaded Gaul, leaving Britain in the control of Caradoc. Upon reaching the kingdom of Armorica (*historically, the region between the Loire and Seine rivers, later comprising Brittany, Normandy, Anjou, Maine and Touraine*), he defeated the king and killed thousands of inhabitants.

Before departing to Rome, he summoned **Conanus**,<sup>335</sup> the rebellious nephew of Octavius, and asked him to rule as king of the land, which was renamed Brittany, or "Little Britain." Conan's men married native women after cutting out their tongues to preserve the purity of their language.

Following the death of Caradoc, rule of Britain as regent passed to Dionotus, who - facing a foreign invasion - appealed to Maximus, who finally sent a man named **Gracianus Municeps** with two legions to stop the attack. He killed many thousands before the invaders fled to Ireland. Maximus died in Rome soon after and Dionotus became the official king of the Britons. Unfortunately, before he could begin his reign, Gracianus took hold of the crown and made himself king over Dionotus.

## XXV

### The Dukes of Cornwall Part the First

**Corineus** (c. 1100 BC), in medieval British legend, was a prodigious warrior, a fighter of giants, and the eponymous founder of Cornwall.

Corineus settled in Cornwall, which was then inhabited by **giants**. Brutus and his army killed most of them, but their leader, **Gogmagog**, was kept alive for a wrestling match with Corineus. The fight took place near Plymouth, and Corineus killed him by throwing him over a cliff.

Corineus was the first of the legendary rulers of Cornwall. After Brutus died the rest of Britain was divided between his three sons: **Locrinus** (England), Kamber (Wales) and Albanactus (Scotland). Locrinus agreed to marry Corineus's daughter **Gwendolen** (c. 1075 BC), but fell in love instead with Estrildis, a captured German princess.

Corineus threatened war in response to this affront to Queen Gwendolen - first recorded queen regnant of Britain, and so to pacify him Locrinus married Gwendolen, but kept Estrildis as his secret mistress. After Corineus died Locrinus divorced Gwendolen and married Estrildis, and Gwendolen responded by raising an army in Cornwall and making war against her ex-husband. Locrinus was killed in battle, and Gwendolen threw Estrildis and her daughter, Habren, into the River Severn

• •

<sup>335</sup> Conan was well established in genealogies as the founder of Brittany.

Henwinus (c. 750 BC) was a legendary ruler of Cornwall in the time of King Leir.

ii



*Cordelia*  
William Frederick Yeames

**Cunedagius** son of Duke Henwinus of Cornwall and Regan daughter of King Leir despised the rule of his aunt **Queen Cordelia** of the Britons,  
Leir's favourite daughter,  
being the younger sister to Goneril and Regan.  
With the help of his cousin **Marganus I**,  
Cunedagius took over the kingdom from Cordelia and ruled half of it.  
Following Cordelia's suicide,  
Cunedagius came to rule the region of Britain southwest of the Humber c. 715 BC.

Two years after they split the island,  
Marganus invaded Cornwall and destroyed much of the land.  
Cunedagius met him in battle and defeated him.  
Marganus fled throughout Britain until he was cornered in Wales.  
Cunedagius killed him and became king of all of Britain.  
He ruled all of Britain for 33 years and was succeeded by his son, Rivallo.

•      •

King Cloten was a legendary ruler of Cornwall during pentarchy after Ferrex and Porrex in c. 450 BC.

iii

**Dyfnwal Moelmud** son of Cloten,  
an early king and lawmaker among the Welsh,  
was a legendary ruler of Cornwall and a legendary king of the Britons v. 420 BC.  
He restored order after the "Civil War of the Five Kings."

His family were a cadet branch of the dynasty of Brutus, the dominant line having ended with Porrex I before the civil war. His death sparked another civil war between his two sons, Belinus and Brennius.

**Belinus the Great** brother of Brennius son of Dunvallo Molmutius was a legendary ruler of Cornwall and a legendary king of the Britons c. 390 BC.

Belinus and Brennius merged their armies into one great one and invaded Gaul.  
After a year of warfare, the joint army managed to submit all the Frankish kingdoms in Gaul to their authority.

Brennius went to fight the Romans while Belinus remained at war with the Germans (who were being helped by various other Italian troops).

Belinus decided to join forces with his brother, who was besieging Rome.

Belinus left Brennius in Rome and returned to Britain. He ruled in peace, building many new cities and restoring many decaying ones.

iv

**Tasciovanus** (Tenvantius) was a historical king of the **Catuvellauni tribe** before the Roman conquest of Britain - and a legendary ruler of Cornwall c. 55 BC. He was made duke by Cassibelanus... and later succeeded him as king of Britain.

**Thanor** was a legendary ruler of Cornwall in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. He was contemporary with **Joseph of Arimathea** - the man who donated his own prepared tomb for the burial of Jesus after Jesus' crucifixion. Joseph was given the responsibility of keeping the **Holy Grail**.

**Julius Asclepiodotus**, a Roman praetorian prefect, was a legendary ruler of Cornwall - and a King of the Britons AD 295, in opposition to **Allectus**, a Roman who oppressed the people of Britain.

- to be continued -  
- infer -

## XXVI

**Caradoc** (middle Welsh: **Karadaw**) was the duke of Cornwall under the reign of Octavius, who became king of Cornwall and died during the Emperor Magnus Maximus' reign.

Caradoc was the Duke of Cornwall during the reign of Octavius. It was he who suggested to Octavius that he should wed his daughter to Maximus and unite Britain with Rome through that union. When Octavius agreed to the idea, Caradoc sent out his son, Mauricius, to Rome as to deliver the message to Maximus. Conan Meriadoc son of Caradoc of Cornwall, the king's nephew, did not approve and nearly attacked Maximus when he landed near Southampton. Only when Caradoc arrived was peace restored. They dispersed and Octavius handed Maximus the kingship and retired, as Caradoc rallied behind Maximus.

Five years after Maximus became king of Britain, he left the country

to ravage the land of Gaul.

Maximus had left governance of his kingdom to Caradoc's brother,

Dionotus,

whom he calls the king of Cornwall,

"who had succeeded his brother Caradoc in that kingdom."

*ii*

**Dionotus** was the "legendary" king of Cornwall, succeeding his brother Caradoc, and regent of Britain during the campaigns in Gaul of Emperor Magnus Maximus.

When Conan Meriadoc, king of Brittany sent a request to Britain for Briton women to help populate his country, Dionotus, being extremely noble and powerful, accepted the request and sent seventy-two thousand women to Gaul. The ships, *however*, became lost at sea and most of the women died or were captured by barbarians.

A small group of these women defied kings Wanius and Melga of the Picts and the Huns, who attempted to have intercourse with them.

The women were slaughtered for their defiance and the kings invaded Britain from Albany.

Britain, due to the war led by Maximus and the tragedy at sea, was empty of all able-bodied men and women.

This allowed the two kings room to destroy much of the countryside before any attempt at resisting them could be made.

Maximus finally sent a man named Gracianus Municeps to stop the attack by the kings.

He was sent in with two legions and killed many thousands of warriors before the kings fled off the island to Ireland.

Maximus died in Rome soon after,

and while no mention is made of Dionotus or his fate, Gracianus took hold of the crown.

*iii*

**Gracianus Municeps** was a legendary King of the Britons.

After the death of Roman Emperor Magnus Maximus, Gracianus seized the throne of Britain upon receiving word of Maximus's demise, by whose orders he had been sent to defend the attacked island while Maximus was campaigning on the continent.

Gracianus served under Maximus during his campaigns in Rome and Germany,

and was sent to Britain to defeat Wanius and Melga, the kings of the Picts and Huns *respectively*.

He defeated the armies of both kings immediately upon arrival, ejecting them to Ireland.

Soon after, word came that Maximus had died at the hands of either a supporter of the late Roman Emperor Gratian or by one of Gracianus Municeps' own followers.

Gracianus seized the crown of Britain and began a reign of terror throughout the island

but soon certain plebs banded together and assassinated him.

This led to a period of instability when news of his demise reached Britain's enemies, but he was eventually succeeded by Constantine II of Britain *brother of King Aldroenus of Brittany*.

•      •

### Saint Ursula

**Saint Ursula** (Latin for 'little female bear') is a Romano-British Christian saint.

She was a princess who, at the request of her father King Dionotus of Dumnonia in south-west Britain,

set sail to join her future husband, the pagan governor **Conan Meriadoc** of Armorica,

along with 11,000 virginal handmaidens.<sup>336</sup>

After a miraculous storm brought them over the sea in a single day to a Gaulish port,

Ursula declared that before her marriage she would undertake a pan-European pilgrimage.

She headed for Rome with her followers and persuaded **Pope Cyriacus**<sup>337</sup>

and Sulpicius, bishop of Ravenna, to join them.

After setting out for Cologne, which was being besieged by Huns, all the virgins were beheaded in a massacre - little children, ranging in age from two months to seven years, were found the sacred virgins.

The Huns' leader shot Ursula dead with a bow and arrow, in about 383 (*the date varies*).

•      •

Being terrified by the punishments and slaughter of the others,

**Cordula** hid herself,

but repenting her deed,

on the next day she declared herself to the Huns of her own accord, and thus was the last of them all to receive the crown of martyrdom."

<sup>336</sup> By the fifth century, the number of **virgin martyrs** was limited to a small number between two and eleven according to different sources. The 11,000 were first mentioned in the ninth century; suggestions as to where this came from have included reading the name "Undecimilia" or "Ximillia" as a number, or reading the abbreviation "XI. M. V." as *eleven thousand (in Roman numerals) virgins* rather than *eleven martyred virgins*. One scholar has written that in the eighth century, the relics of virgin martyrs were found, among which were included those of a girl named Ursula, who was eleven years old—in Latin, *undecimilia*. *Undecimilia* was subsequently misread or misinterpreted as *undicimila* (11,000), thus producing the legend of the 11,000 virgins. Another theory is that there was only one virgin martyr, named Undecimilla, "which by some blundering monk was changed into eleven thousand." It has also been suggested that *cum [...] militibus* "with [...] soldiers" was misread as *cum [...] millibus* "with [...] thousands."

<sup>337</sup> **Pope Cyriacus** is unknown in the pontifical records, though from late 384 there was a Pope Siricius.



*The Martyrdom of Saint Ursula*  
Hans Memling

## XXVII

By the early 5<sup>th</sup> century,  
the Roman Empire could no longer defend itself against either  
internal rebellion  
or the external threat posed by expanding Germanic tribes in  
Northern Europe.  
This situation and its consequences governed the eventual  
permanence of Britain's detachment from the rest of the Empire.

The **end of Roman rule in Britain** marked the transition from  
Roman Britain to post-Roman Britain.  
Roman rule ended in different parts of Britain at different times,  
and under different circumstances.

In 383,  
Roman rule in northern and western Britain ended when Roman  
troops were withdrawn by the usurper **Magnus Maximus**.  
Around 410,  
the Romano-British expelled the magistrates of the usurper  
**Constantine III**,  
ostensibly in response to his failures to use the Roman garrison he  
had stripped from Britain to protect the island.

Roman Emperor **Honorius** replied to a request for assistance by  
telling the Roman cities to see to their own defence,  
a tacit acceptance of temporary British self-government.  
Honorius was fighting a large-scale war in Italy against the Visigoths  
under their leader Alaric,  
with Rome itself under siege.  
No forces could be spared to protect distant Britain.  
Though it is likely that Honorius expected to regain control over the  
provinces soon,

by the mid-500s **Procopius** recognized that Britannia was entirely  
lost to the Romans.

## The end of Roman rule in Britain

### XXVIII

**Flavius Claudius Constantinus**,  
known in English as **Constantine III** (died 411 by 18 September),  
*also known as Constantine II, King of the Britons*,  
was a Roman general who came to power following Gracianus  
Municeps' reign,  
*which had ended with his assassination*.  
He declared himself Western Roman Emperor in Britannia in AD 407  
and established himself in Gaul.

Constantine rose to the throne immediately following the **Groans of the Britons**<sup>338</sup> (Latin: *gemitus Britannorum*),  
the final appeal made by the Britons to the Roman military consul  
"Agitius" for assistance against Pict and Scot raiders.  
The message was addressed to the general Flavius Aetius  
and requested his aid in defending formerly Roman Britain from the  
Picts and Scots.

**Flavius Aetius** (391–454), *dux et patricius*, commonly called simply  
**Aetius** or **Aëtius**, (d. 454),  
was a Roman general of the closing period of the Western Roman  
Empire.  
He was an able military commander - *magister militum* ("master of  
soldiers") of the Western Roman Empire  
*and consul of the year 446*,  
and the most influential man in the Western Roman Empire for two  
decades (433–454).  
The collapsing Western Roman Empire had few military resources to  
spare during its decline.  
*The failure of the Roman armies to secure Britain led the Britons to invite Anglo-Saxon mercenaries to the island, precipitating the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain.*

*ii*

On 31 December 406  
several tribes of Barbarian invaders,  
including the Vandals, the Burgundians, the Alans and the Sueves,  
crossed the Rhine perhaps near Mainz,  
and overran the Roman defensive works in a successful invasion of  
the Western Roman Empire.

This was a blow to the Western Empire from which it never  
recovered.  
The Roman authorities were never able to eject or destroy these  
invaders,  
most of whom eventually settled in Spain and North Africa,  
nor to face the movements of the Franks, Burgundians and Visigoths  
in Gaul at the same time.

Also, a contributing factor of major importance was the disunity  
among the Romans themselves.  
A unified Empire

<sup>338</sup> The Groans are generally dated to the 440s and 450s, preceding the death of Aetius. If Geoffrey's Constantine rose to the throne immediately following the Groans, this would place his reign in this period. Geoffrey gives a 10-year-reign for Constantine and his marriage lasts just as long. However the eldest son Constans is clearly older than 10-years-old by the time his father dies. He is already an adult candidate of the throne and has had time to follow a monastic career. Even assuming there is a time gap between the death of Constantine and the adulthood of Constans, his younger brothers have not aged at all in the narrative.

with the full support of a loyal population  
willing to make the necessary sacrifices to overcome invaders/settlers  
had shown in the past  
that it was possible to keep the Empire's borders secure.

At the time of this invasion,  
the provinces of Britain were in revolt, setting up and pulling down a  
series of usurpers,  
which ended with the *elevation of Constantine early in 407*.

Fearful of a Germanic invasion and desperate for some sense of  
security in a world rapidly falling apart,  
the Roman military in Britain chose as their leader a man named after  
the famed emperor of the early fourth century,  
**Constantine the Great**,  
who had himself risen to power through a military coup in Britain.  
A common soldier, but one of some ability, **Constantine** moved  
quickly.  
He crossed the English Channel to the continent at *Bononia*  
and (*historians have assumed*) took along with him all of the mobile  
troops left in Britain,  
thus denuding the province of any first line military protection and  
explaining their disappearance in the early fifth century.

iii

In 407

Claudius Constantine (Constantine III) rebelled against Emperor  
Honorius.  
He appointed two generals -  
**Iustinianus** (died 407 AD), an officer of the Western Roman army  
in Britain, and  
**Frank Nebiogastes**, an officer of the Western Roman army in  
Britain,  
leading the vanguard of his forces - *magistri militum* of the army of  
Gaul.  
*But they were to be defeated by Sarus the Goth and Stilicho's  
lieutenant.*

iv

### Sarus the Goth

**Sarus or Saurus** (d. 413 AD) was a Gothic chieftain and commander  
for the emperor Honorius.  
He was "a brave and invincible warrior," possessing "marvelous  
heroism,"  
who "excelled all the other confederates in power and rank" and had  
"intrepidity" and "experience in warlike affairs."  
He was known for his hostility to the prominent Gothic brothers-in-  
law **Alaric I** and **Attaulf**.

**Alaric I** son (or paternal grandson) of chieftain *Rohestes* was the  
first King of the Visigoths from 395–410 -  
best known for his *sack of Rome* in 410.

Sarus was the brother of **Sigeric**, who ruled the Goths briefly in  
415.  
Nothing is known of his life before he came to notice in 406  
commanding a force of Gothic troops,  
along with other barbarian *foederati*,  
against the invasion of Italy by **Radagaisus** of 405-6 - *infer*.

Roman and federate troops ultimately defeated the invaders at the  
**Battle of Faesulae** - fought in 406 CE.

• •

**Stilicho**  
Supreme Commander of the Western Roman Army

After **General Flavius Stilicho** repelled the Visigoths at Pollentia  
and Verona,  
he encountered a new incursion of Vandals and Goths led by  
**Radagaisus**  
whose forces attacked Florence.  
Stilicho ultimately defeated the invaders at **Faesulae** (modern  
*Fiesole*)  
with support from **Uldin the Hun** and Sarus the Goth.  
*Radagaisus would be executed after the battle*  
*and survivors of his armies fled to Alaric - infer.*

b

In 407

Sarus the Goth was sent against the British usurper Constantine III.  
First he defeated and killed Iustinianus, one of Constantine's *magistri  
militum* -  
Nebiogastes was trapped in - and then killed outside Valence.

After the deaths of the generals Nebiogastes and Iustinianus in 407,  
the Western usurper Constantine III appointed **Edobichus** and  
**Gerontius** as his *magistri militum* (commanders-in-chief of the  
army).

*Although Edobichus was a native of Britain his ancestors were  
Franks.*

Sarus commanded an army - and may have been appointed *magister  
militum* (general) for this expedition;  
elsewhere he is said to have had a following or warband of only about  
three hundred.

Then Sarus laid siege to Constantine himself in Valentia,  
but fled back to Italy at the approach of Constantine's new generals  
Edobichus and Gerontius.

Upon their promotions,  
they forced Sarus, the general of the Western Emperor Honorius, to  
end his siege of Constantine in Valence  
and retreat into Italy.

But Sarus was forced to buy his passage through the Alpine passes  
from the brigand **Bagaudae** (late Roman bandits or rebels),  
who controlled them.

Constantine secured the Rhine frontier, and garrisoned the passes that  
led from Gaul into Italy.

By May 408  
he had made **Arles** his capital, where he appointed **Apollinaris**  
*grandfather of Saint Sidonius Apollinaris* as prefect.

c

Early in 408,  
whilst commanding a force of barbarians at Ravenna,  
**Stilicho** induced him to mutiny in an attempt to prevent Honorius  
from traveling there.

Then, when Stilicho was recalled by the Emperor under suspicion of  
treachery,  
Sarus,  
apparently incensed that Stilicho continued to obey orders and  
refused to use the barbarian troops on hand to defend himself,  
fought his way through Stilicho's Hun bodyguard to protest.

Later in 408,  
after the fall of Stilicho,  
Sarus' name was put forward as Stilicho's successor as the most  
suitable candidate for the office of *magister militum in praesenti*  
(supreme commander),  
but the Emperor Honorius refused to promote him.

## Radagaisus

**Radagaisus** (died 23 August 406) was a Gothic king who led an invasion of Roman Italy in late 405 and the first half of 406. A committed pagan, Radagaisus evidently planned to sacrifice the *Senators of the Christian Roman Empire to the gods*, and to burn Rome to the ground.



Roman General Flavius Stilicho Confronts Radagaisus, Ostrogothic Leader, at Fiesole

Radagaisus, whose early career and ultimate origins are unknown, fleeing Hunnic pressures, invaded Italy without passing through the Balkans, which indicates that his invasion began somewhere on the Great Hungarian Plain, west of the Carpathian Mountains.

Radagaisus' force probably consisted of about 20,000 fighting men. Many of the fighters were accompanied by their families and other noncombatants, meaning that the total size of Radagaisus' group may have approached 100,000.

Coin hoards, buried by residents who were apparently aware of Radagaisus' approach, suggest that his route passed through southeastern Noricum and western Pannonia.

About this time **Flavia Solva** was burned out and largely abandoned and **Aguntum** was devastated by fire. An indeterminate number of refugees fled ahead of his army as it marched over the Alps. Arian Christians swelling his forces.<sup>339</sup>

<sup>339</sup> **Arianism** is a nontrinitarian belief that asserts that Jesus Christ is a Son of God, created by God the Father, distinct from the Father and therefore subordinate to the Father. It denies that Jesus is God the Son.

## The Western Roman Empire under Stilicho

mobilized thirty *numeri* (about 15,000 men) from the Italian field army in response to Radagaisus' invasion.

A second contingent of Roman troops, possibly recalled from the Rhine frontier, complemented the Italian forces.

In addition, they received help from Gothic foederati under **Sarus** and Hunnic forces under **Uldin**.

**Alaric I** remained inactive through the whole episode, committed by treaty to Illyricum

Radagaisus' army had the run of northern Italy for at least six months while the Empire mobilized its forces.

They eventually made their way to the bridgehead community of Florentia.

They blockaded the city, where no less than a third of the Goth's troops and allies were killed.

Stilicho's army relieved the *siege of Florentia* as the city was approaching the point of surrender.

The Roman counterattack was extremely successful, and Radagaisus was forced to retreat into the hills of Fiesole, about 8 km away.

There, Radagaisus - compelled by a revolt within his forces - abandoned his followers and tried to escape, but was captured by the Romans.

He was executed on 23 August 406.

12,000 of his higher-status fighters were drafted into the Roman army.

Some of the remaining followers were dispersed, while so many of the others were sold into slavery that the slave market briefly collapsed.

vi

In his youth **Constans II** eldest son of the Western Roman Emperor Constantine III

and older brother of Julianus and Ambrosius Aurelian and Uther Pendragon

spent his early life studying at a monastery until he was summoned from the monastery where he was dwelling He would be killed during the revolts and fighting that ended his father's reign.

In the summer of 408,

as the Roman forces in Italy assembled to counterattack, Constantine III, who had proclaimed himself Emperor the previous year in Britain

and then crossed over into Gaul, without the approval of the Emperor Honorius, elevated Constans II to the rank of **Augustus** (Caesar), or co-emperor - from 409 to 411 -

and sent him with the general **Gerontius** and the prefect **Apollinaris** into Hispania, fearful that several cousins of the **Emperor Honorius** in Hispania would organize an attack from that direction

while troops under Sarus and Stilicho attacked him from Italy in a pincer maneuver. He struck first at Hispania - to rule the province,

which was a stronghold of the **House of Theodosius** - to rule the province and fight members of the House of Theodosius - who had not recognized Constantine and had stayed loyal to the ineffectual emperor.

The four cousins of Honorius were: Theodosiolus, Lagodius, Didimus and Verenianus

The cousins of Honorius were defeated without much difficulty. After some initial defeats, Constans captured two of his enemies (Didimus and Verenianus), while the other two - Lagodius and Theodosiolus - managed to escape and fled to Constantinople.

Constans II left his wife and household at Zaragoza under the care of Gerontius to return to report to Arles, where the two prisoners were put to death.

Meanwhile, the loyalist Roman army mutinied at Ticinum (*Pavia*) on August 13<sup>th</sup>, which was followed by the execution of the patrician Stilicho on August 22<sup>nd</sup>.

As a by-product of these events, the actions of an intrigue within the Imperial court, Sarus abandoned the western army followed by his men; this left the Emperor Honorius in Ravenna without any significant military power, and also facing the problem of a Gothic army under **Alaric** roaming unchecked in **Etruria**.

So, when Constantine's envoys arrived to parley at Ravenna, the fearful Honorius eagerly recognized Constantine as co-emperor, and the two were joint consuls for the year 409

vii

However Gerontius decided to betray Constantine, and in Autumn 409, the barbarian invaders plundering Gaul, reached the Pyrenees, sweeping away Roman defenses and entering into Hispania.

Upon hearing of this development, Constantine sent Edobichus to the Franks and the Germans across the Rhine to raise reinforcements.

Meanwhile Gerontius invaded southern Gaul, found Constantine at Arles, and laid siege to the city until the Imperial general Constantius arrived on the scene and forced him to retreat.

•      •

### Maximus of Hispania

**Maximus**, also called **Maximus Tyrannus**, was a Roman usurper (409 - 411) in Hispania (the Iberian Peninsula - *modern Spain and Portugal*). He had been elected by general Gerontius, *who might have been his father*.

Relations between the usurper Constantine III and his general Gerontius, who had been sent to Hispania, had been deteriorating through the year 409.

When Constantine had sent an army under his son and heir **Constans**, Gerontius mutinied and installed Maximus in the late summer of 410.

Gerontius may have feared being replaced as Constantine's chief military figure in the provinces of Hispania and decided to side with the local Theodosian supporters. However, by the summer of 410 Gerontius, who had received no support from Italy, was threatened by Constans - and was desperate for imperial authority to confirm his arrangements with his barbarian allies.

Faced by these threats, "Gerontius was at length driven into open revolt."

viii

In 410,

**Sarus the Goth** was apparently subsisting independently in the region of **Picenum**.

**Ataulf**, who was coming to join his brother-in-law **Alaric**, decided to attack him in passing and Sarus, thinking his force of three hundred would be no match for the Gothic army, fled to Honorius.

Later that year,

when **Alaric** was conducting negotiations with Honorius near Ravenna,

Sarus with his warband attacked him, seemingly on his own initiative.

This prompted **Alaric** to finally give up on negotiations and sack Rome on August 24<sup>th</sup>.

ix

That year was the high-water mark of Constantine's success. But by September, the tribes that had overrun the Rhine defenses, and had spent the intervening two years and eight months burning and plundering their way through Gaul, had reached the Pyrenees, where they broke through Constantine's garrisons and entered Hispania.

While Constantine prepared to send his son Constans back to deal with this crisis,

word came that his general **Gerontius** had rebelled, raising his own man and relative, **Maximus of Hispania**, as co-emperor

And Maximus managed some degree of rule over the provinces of Hispania.<sup>340</sup>

Despite Constantine's best efforts, his fear of an attack from Hispania did come to pass the following year, when Gerontius advanced with the support of his barbarian allies.

About the same time **Saxon pirates** raided Britain, which Constantine had left defenseless.

Obviously upset that Constantine had neglected them in his efforts to establish his own empire and had failed to defend them against the assaults they had hoped he would prevent, the Roman inhabitants of Britain and Armorica rebelled against Constantine's authority and expelled his officials.

Constantine's response to this tightening circle of enemies was a final desperate gamble:

he marched on Italy with the remaining troops left to him, encouraged by the entreaties of one **Allobich** who wanted to replace Honorius with a more capable ruler.

But this invasion ended in defeat, with **Allobich** losing his life and Constantine forced to retreat into Gaul in the late spring of 410.

### Death of Gerontius

In the first 18 months of his reign Constantine's position had grown even more untenable - the rebel Gerontius' forces defeated Constantine's at **Vienne** (*modern Vienne, Isère*) (411), where his son **Constans** was captured and executed.

<sup>340</sup> The mint at Barcino struck coins in his name and there is evidence for major construction work on that city's walls during his reign.

Constantine's Praetorian prefect **Decimus Rusticus**, who had replaced Apollinaris a year earlier, abandoned Constantine, to be caught up in the new rebellion of **Jovinus** in the Rhineland - *infer.*

Gerontius trapped Constantine inside **Arelatum** (Arles) and besieged him.

At the same time a new general was found to support Honorius. The future **Constantius III**, who arrived at Arles, put Gerontius to flight and then took over the siege of Constantine in Arles.

Constantine held out, hoping for the return of his general **Edobichus** who was raising troops in northern Gaul amongst the Franks, but on his return Edobichus was defeated by a simple stratagem.

Constantine's last slender hope faded when his last troops guarding the Rhine abandoned him to support Jovinus and he was forced to surrender. Despite the promise of safe passage, and Constantine's assumption of clerical offices, Constantius imprisoned the former soldier and had him beheaded on his way to Ravenna in either August or September 411.

#### *Death of Edobichus*

Despite being besieged now by Constantius, Constantine continued to hold Arles, having heard that Edobichus was nearby with the barbarian troops. When Edobichus crossed the Rhone with his troops, he encountered Constantius' force blocking his path. As he prepared to engage the Imperial force, **Ulpilas** fell upon his soldiers from behind and defeated them. Edobichus managed to flee the battlefield on horseback and fled to one **Ecdichus** whom he believed was his friend. However Ecdichus, seeking a reward from Constantius slew Edobichus and brought his head to Constantius, but the Imperial general rewarded him only with praise. Edobichus' death convinced Constantine to end his resistance, and the usurper took priestly vows before surrendering to the general Constantius.

Constans was to go to Hispania to settle the matter, but before leaving news came that Gerontius had stopped the invaders, had rebelled from Constantine, and had proclaimed Emperor one of his own men, **Maximus of Hispania**.

With the support of the barbarians, Gerontius took over Constantine's territory; in 411, he would capture the city of Vienne and put Constans to death.

Ambrosius was still underage and **Vortigern rose to the throne**. When Constans was killed by the Picts serving as bodyguards of Vortigern, Vortigern feigned anguish and had the killers executed.

Seeing the losses of the armies of the two usurpers, Honorius sent his general **Constantius Chlorus** into Gaul; Gerontius' soldiers deserted him for the Imperial general and Gerontius retired to Hispania, and when his remaining troops turned on him... committed suicide

Deprived of his major supporter, Maximus reportedly fled to sanctuary "amongst the barbarians in Hispania."

*The remainder of the recorded history of this shadowy figure becomes even more murky.*

*Maximus was brought to Rome where he was displayed and executed, along with one **Jovinianus** around 23 January 422, during Honorius' tricennalia.*

*He was defeated and captured by the comes Asterius, for which achievement Asterius was rewarded with the Patriciate.<sup>341</sup>*

x

#### **Jovinus**

**Jovinus** was a Gallo-Roman senator and claimed to be Roman Emperor (411–413 AD).

Following the defeat of the usurper known with the name of Constantine III, Jovinus was proclaimed emperor at Mainz in 411, a puppet supported by **Gundahar**, king of the Burgundians, and **Goar**, king of the Alans.

Jovinus kept his position in Gaul for two years, long enough to issue coinage that showed him wearing the imperial diadem.

He was supported by a number of local Gallo-Roman nobles who had survived Constantine's defeat.

Under the pretext of Jovinus' imperial authority, Gundahar and his Burgundians established themselves on the left bank of the Rhine (the Roman side) between the river Lauter and the Nahe.

Here they founded a kingdom with the old Romanized Gaulish settlement of **Borbetomagus** (Worms) as its capital.

Jovinus' end came after the Visigoths under Ataulf left Italy (at Priscus Attalus' advice), ostensibly to join him, carrying with them as hostages the ex-emperor Attalus and **Galla Placidia**,<sup>342</sup> Honorius' half-sister.

Then Ataulf attacked and killed Sarus, who had also come to support Jovinus.

Jovinus, offended at this act, then failed to consult Ataulf when he elevated his brother Sebastianus as co-emperor.

Insulted, Ataulf allied his Visigoths with Honorius, and they defeated Jovinus' troops.

Sebastianus was executed.

Jovinus fled for his life, but was besieged and captured in Valentia (Valence, Drôme) and taken to Narbo (Narbonne),

where **Caius Posthumus Dardanus**, the praetorian prefect (governor) in Gaul,

who had remained loyal to Honorius, had him executed.

Jovinus' and Sebastianus' heads were afterwards sent to Honorius and mounted on the walls of Ravenna (before being passed on to Carthage, where they were put on permanent display with the heads of four other usurpers).

xi

Sarus seems to have had stayed in the service of the Emperor for two years,

<sup>341</sup> **Patrician** (from Latin: *patricius*) is a term that originally referred to a group of ruling class families in ancient Rome.

<sup>342</sup> **Aelia Galla Placidia** (388 – 27 November 450), daughter of the Roman Emperor **Theodosius I**, was the Regent for Emperor **Valentinian III** from 423 until his majority in 437, and a major force in Roman politics for most of her life. She was consort to **Ataulf, King of the Goths** from 414 until his death in 415, and briefly Empress consort to **Constantius III** in 421.

but when in 412, **Jovinus** had approached from Northern Gaul, supported at first by **Athaulf the Visigoth**, he went to join him because of a grudge against Honorius, who had failed to investigate or avenge the murder of his servant. Sarus had only twenty eight men with him, but Ataulf gathered a force of ten thousand to waylay him. Even so, Sarus fought with marvelous courage and was only with difficulty taken alive, to be soon killed.

Ataulf had been foolish enough to take one of Sarus' followers into his own service; this man waited till Ataulf visited his stable alone and there killed him (September 415). Sarus' brother, **Sigeric**, then ruled for seven days before **King Wallia of the Visigoths** from 415 to 419, killed him and took over the kingship.

•                    •

**Asterius (comes Hispanorum)**

**Asterius**, also known as **Asterio**, **Asturio** or **Astirio**, was a Roman general who obtained the title of **comes Hispanorum** in which capacity he participated in an important military expedition against the Vandals who had established themselves in the north of Gallaecia. He was also able to defeat the usurper, **Maximus of Hispania** who had taken refuge with the barbarian tribes there. Due to his military prowess and his considerable amount of battlefield victories, he was given the title of Patrician in 422.

After the victories of **King Wallia of the Visigoths** in the campaigns of 416 and 418, the defeated Alans and Silingi Vandals took refuge with the **Hasdingi Vandals** who were established in the coastal areas of **Gallaecia, north of the Minho River**. The Vandals, needing new territories to place their newly acquired populations, expanded to the south and blocked their neighbors, the Suebi at the **Battle of the Nervasos Mountains** of 419.

In 419, Asterius was sent as *comes Hispanorum* with a powerful Roman Army to finish retaking the territories occupied by the barbarian invaders in Hispania and to put down the second uprising of Maximus of Hispania.

Later in the same year, a Frontón priest accused several important families [ ] including that of **Asterius of Priscillianism**, which forced him to travel to Tarraco to defend his family against the allegations.

Asterius established his Praetorium in Tarraco and gathered an army to commence a military campaign in Gallaecia. He came to the aid of a **Suebi army** which was surrounded by the Vandals, defeating them at the **Battle of the Nervasos Mountains**. He was unable to prevent a large body of the enemy from retreating to **Hispania Baetica**, a move which ultimately came out in Asturias' favor.

A year later in 420, Asterius' campaign forced the Vandals to retreat south where they were intercepted at **Bracara Augusta** by the vicarius, **Maurocelus**.

The two Roman armies attacked the Vandals from both sides, decisively defeating them

In 421, Asterius was called to Ravenna after the crowning of Constantius III as the Augustus of the Western Roman Empire. He was named a Patrician of Rome and given the charge of magister militum in 422.

*xii*

Constantine was killed by a Pict and his reign was followed by a brief succession crisis. Candidates for the throne included all three sons of Constantine, but there were problems for their eventual rise to the throne. Constans was a monk, and Ambrosius and Uther were underage and still in their cradle.

**Roman rule never returned to Britain after the death of Constantine III**, (also known as Constantine II of Britain): "from that time onwards it remained under [the rule] of tyrants."

Following Constantine's murder, **Vortigern**, leader of the **Gewisse tribe**, convinced Constans to leave the religious life and become king. The weak and unpopular former monk became a puppet, putting all but the title of his office into the hands of Vortigern, his chief adviser and the power behind the throne. Vortigern eventually disposed of him by tricking some Picts, liaisons in his employ, into murdering him in his sleep. The treacherous Vortigern then took the throne for himself and the two remaining sons (Ambrosius and Uther, still very young) were quickly hustled into exile in Brittany. Ambrosius' family perished in the turmoil of the Saxon uprisings.

*xiii*

**Emrys/Merlin** warned Vortigern that Ambrosius and Uther had already sailed for Britain and were soon to arrive, apparently to claim his throne. Ambrosius soon arrived at the head of the army and was crowned king. He besieged Vortigern at the castle of "Genoreu"<sup>343</sup> and burned the castle down and Vortigern died with it

Having killed Vortigern, Ambrosius next turns his attention to Hengist.

The Saxons have already heard of his bravery and battle prowess. They immediately retreated beyond the Humber.

Hengist soon amasses a massive army to face Ambrosius. His army counted 200,000 men and Ambrosius' only 10,000 men. He marched south and the first battle between the two armies took place at **Maisbeli**, where Ambrosius emerged the victor.

Following his defeat, Hengist retreated towards **Cunungeburg** (i.e. Conisbrough, not far from Hatfield).

The two brothers returned from exile with a large army when Vortigern's power had faded. They destroyed Vortigern and became friends with **Emrys/Merlin** - and Ambrosius' supposed supernatural powers were passed to Emrys/Merlin. They went on to defeat the Saxon leader **Hengist** in two battles at Maisbeli (probably Ballifield, near Sheffield) and Cunengeburg.

<sup>343</sup> "Genoreu", which is identified with Nennius' *Cair Guorthigirn* ("Fort Vortigern") and the hillfort at Little Doward.

Ambrosius led his army against the new position of the Saxons. The second battle was more evenly fought, and Hengist had a chance to achieve victory. However, Ambrosius received reinforcements from Brittany and the tide of the battle turned in favor of the Britons. Hengist himself was captured by his old enemy **Eldol, Consul of Gloucester** and decapitated and Ambrosius became king of Britain.

Soon after the battle, the surviving Saxon leaders **Octa** and **Eosa** submit themselves to Ambrosius' rule. He pardons them and grants them an area near Scotland.

### The end of Roman rule in Britain and preceding Vortigern's alliance with the Saxons.



Detail from Lambeth Palace Library MS 6 folio 43v illustrating an episode in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136) in which Vortigern meets the young Merlin, who explains that an underground fight between red and white dragons is causing Vortigern's fortress to collapse.

## XXIX

### Vortigern

**Vortigern**<sup>344</sup> (*Uortigerno; Gurthigerno*) son of *Vitalis* son of *Vitalinus* son of *Gloui* was a tyrannical 5<sup>th</sup> century warlord in Britain, a leading ruler among the Britons - who was associated with *Glevum*, the *civitas* of Gloucester. Vortigern, who was Constantine's seneschal, had become the high king of the Britons in the wake of the **end of Roman rule in Britain**. He was successor to **Constans** son of the usurping emperor **Constantine III**. Vortigern had used Constans as a puppet king and ruled the nation through him until he finally managed to kill him

<sup>344</sup> **Vortigern** (Welsh: *Gwrtheyrn*; Old English: *Wyrtgeorn*; Breton: *Guorthigern*; Irish: *Foirtchern*), also spelled **Vortiger** and **Vortigen**. It is occasionally suggested by scholars that Vortigern could be a title rather than a personal name. The name in Brittonic literally means "Great King" or "Overlord", composed of the elements \**wor-* "over-, super" and \**tigerno-* "king, lord, chief, ruler" (compare Old Breton *machiern*, Cornish *myghtyern*, a type of local ruler (literally "pledge chief") in medieval Brittany and Cornwall).

through the use of insurgent Picts... and the two remaining sons (Ambrosius and Uther, who were still very young) were quickly hustled into exile in Brittany.

b

Vortigern may have been the "**superbus tyrannus**" said to have invited **Hengist de Cantia Regnum** and **Horsa** to aid him in fighting the Picts and the Scots - specifically identifying their tribes as the Saxons, Angles and Jutes. They came in three *cyulis* (or "keels"), "as they call ships of war" - "foretold by a certain soothsayer among them, that they should occupy the country to which they were sailing three hundred years, and half of that time, a hundred and fifty years, should plunder and despoil the same."

c

Vortigern was married to **Sevira daughter of Magnus Maximus**, and gave a line of descent leading to the **royal family of Powys**, who erected the **Pillar of Eliseg**<sup>345</sup>. However, they revolted, killing his son in the process and adding Sussex and Essex to their own kingdom. It is said that he took refuge in North Wales, and that his grave was in Dyfed or the Llyn Peninsula.

d

Vortigern was supported by magicians - a "Council of wise men," which may have been a government based on the representatives of all the "cities" (*civitates*) or a part thereof.

All the councilors, together with *that proud usurper*, Vortigern, had made the mistake of inviting "the fierce and impious Saxons" to settle in Britain.<sup>346</sup> A small group came at first and was settled "on the eastern side of the island, by the invitation of the unlucky [*infaustus*] usurper." This small group of mercenaries proved to be faithless and invited more of their countrymen to join them,<sup>347</sup> and their colony grew. Vortigern granted land in Britain to the Saxons under Hengest and Horsa - first to settle the **Isle of Thanet** - and offered them additional provisions in exchange for their service as mercenaries in exchange for service as **foederati** troops against incursions by Picts and Gaels;

<sup>345</sup> The **Pillar of Eliseg** is a mid-9th century stone cross in North Wales that gives the Old Welsh spelling of Vortigern: **Guarthi[gern]** (the inscription is now damaged and the final letters of the name are missing), believed to be the same person as Gildas' "superbus tyrannus", Vortigern.

<sup>346</sup> Geoffrey mentions a similar tale just before that episode, however, which may be an unintentional duplication. Just after the Romans leave, the archbishop of London is put forward by the representatives of Britain to organize the island's defenses. To do so, he arranges for continental soldiers to come to Britain. Beyond that, more reminds one of Vortigern: the name of the bishop is **Guitelin**, a name similar to the Vitalinus mentioned in the ancestry of Vortigern and to the Vitalinus said to have fought with an Ambrosius at the **Battle of Guolph** (*Battle of Wallop*). This Guitelin/Vitalinus disappears without a trace from the story as soon as Vortigern arrives.

<sup>347</sup> One point of discussion has been over the words Gildas uses to describe the Saxon's subsidies (*annonas, epimenia*) and whether they are legal terms used in a treaty of **foederati**, a late Roman political practice of settling allied barbarian peoples within the boundaries of the empire to furnish troops to aid in the defence of the empire. It is not known whether private individuals imitated this practice. It is also not known whether Gildas' reference to "the eastern side of the island" refers to Kent, East Anglia, Northumbria or the entire east coast of Britain.

then to the rest of the **Kingdom of Kent**, in exchange for the hand of Hengest's daughter; then to Essex and Sussex, after a banquet where the Saxons treacherously slew all of the leaders of the British but saved Vortigern to extract this ransom.

Eventually the Saxons demanded that "their monthly allotments" be increased and, when their demands were eventually refused, broke their treaty and plundered the lands of the Romano-British. Their raids took them "sea-to-sea, heaped up by the eastern band of impious men; and as it devastated all the neighbouring cities and lands, did not cease after it had been kindled, until it burnt nearly the whole surface of the island, and licked the western ocean with its red and savage tongue."

e

At this time Vortigern was King of Britain; a man calculated neither for the field nor the council, but wholly given up to the lusts of the flesh, the slave of every vice: a character of insatiable avarice, ungovernable pride, and polluted by his lusts. To complete the picture, he had defiled his own daughter, who was lured to the participation of such a crime by the hope of sharing his kingdom, and she had borne him a son. Regardless of his treasures at this dreadful juncture, and wasting the resources of the kingdom in riotous living, he was awake only to the blandishments of abandoned women.

Vortigern was accused of incest,<sup>348</sup> oath-breaking, treason, love for a pagan woman, and lesser vices such as pride. His four sons were: Vortimer, Catigern, Pascent, and Faustus.

The drunken seduction of Vortigern created the tradition of toasting in Britain.

ii

### Vortimer

**Vortimer**<sup>349</sup> *incestuous son of the 5th-century Britonnic ruler Vortigern and his daughter - a mere slave* is remembered for his fierce opposition to his father's Saxon allies. He overthrew his father and reigned as King of Britain for a brief period before his death and the restoration of Vortigern to power.

Vortigern allowed Saxons under **Hengest and Horsa** to settle on the Isle of Thanet, and offered them provisions in exchange for their service as mercenaries.

Vortigern soon proved to be an "ignorant king" - and the wily Hengest manipulated him into ceding over more land, allowing more settlers to come from Germany.

After a dire period of Saxon encroachment, exacerbated by even more disgraceful behavior on Vortigern's part, Vortimer finally rose up against the Saxons. He pushed them back to Thanet... and met them in four battles in southeast Britain in the historic county of Kent.

<sup>348</sup> A possible or perhaps intentional mistake of Vortigern for **Vortipor**, accused by Gildas of the same crime.

<sup>349</sup> **Vortimer** (Old Welsh: *Guorthemir*; Welsh: *Gwerthefyr*), also known as **Saint Vortimer** (Welsh: *Gwerthefyr Fendigaid*, lit. "Vortimer the Blessed."

At the third battle Horsa and Vortimer's brother **Catigern** were both slain - Catigern and Horsa had personally met in battle at Epsford and slew each other; at the fourth battle the Saxons were pushed back to sea. Shortly thereafter, *however*, Vortimer died. He had asked his followers to bury him at the place where the Saxons first landed in Britain as a totem against further invasion. However, his followers fail to heed his warning...<sup>350</sup> and the Saxons returned.

b

The Britons had abandoned Vortigern and elevate Vortimer to be king of Britain - and he led the Britons against Hengest's Saxons - *only to return at Vortigern's re-invitation a few years later, following the death of Vortimer*. After he had driven out the Saxons, Vortimer was poisoned by his stepmother **Rowena** *daughter of the Anglo-Saxon chief Hengist - infer...* and Vortigern regained the crown.

Rowena was a beautiful *femme fatale* - she won her people the Kingdom of Kent through her treacherous seduction of Vortigern.

• •

**Cattegern** (Celtic *cato*- "battle", *tigerno*- "lord") is said to have been the son not of Vortigern, but the legendary Powys ancestor figure **Cadell**<sup>351</sup> a servant who was converted by Vortigern's enemy **Saint Germanus of Auxerre - infer**, and thereafter became a king whose descendants ruled Powys through the centuries.

Cadell appears to have been driven out of his father Cadelyn's kingdom by Irish pirates during the chaos of the Saxon rebellion in Southern Britain. He hid himself amongst the peasants of Powys and became a servant of the Irish chieftain, **Benlli**, hoping, one day, to find an opportunity to retrieve his inheritance. His chance arose when **St. Germanus of Auxerre** visited Britain to combat the **Pelagian heresy**.<sup>352</sup> Traveling into the Midlands, St. Germanus heard of the pagan Irish stronghold and, with his many followers, laid siege to the Powysian capital.

Cadell showed them what modest hospitality he could in his rural hovel outside the city walls. Germanus eventually had a dreadful premonition and advised Cadell to remove all his friends from within the city walls. That night, the Royal palace was struck by lightning. The resulting fire spread quickly and all within the city were burnt alive. The young Cadell was thus restored to his throne.<sup>353</sup>

<sup>350</sup> According to the Welsh Triads his bones were buried "in the Chief Ports of this Island."

<sup>351</sup> **Cadell Ddyrnllwg** (Welsh for "Cadell of the Gleaming Hill"; born c. AD 430).

<sup>352</sup> Probably for the second time in AD 447

<sup>353</sup> It is unclear, where the kingdom's capital was at the time; tradition suggests the Clwydian hillfort **Foel Fenlli**, the 'Hill of Benlli', while archaeological evidence points to **Caer Guricon** (*Worcester, Shropshire*). The latter was occupied well into the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and an ancient memorial stone bearing the Irish name, **Cunorix**, has been discovered here.

Cadell married **Gwelfyl**, one of the many daughters of **King Brychan Brycheiniog**.

They had a number of children including his heir, **Cyngen Glodrydd father of Rhyddfedd Frych**,<sup>354</sup>

and Tegid *father of Gwynllwyw*;

and possibly *Gwynfyr Frych, Ystradwel and Ddewer*.

Cadell apparently died quite young.

iii

### Rowena

**Rowena**<sup>355</sup> was the daughter of the Anglo-Saxon chief Hengist and a wife of Vortigern, King of the Britons - *Vortigern had usurped the throne of Britain from the rightful king - Constans*.



*Vortigern and Rowena*  
William Hamilton

Following his brother Horsa and his arrival at **Ynys Ruym** (*modern Thanet*), Hengist negotiated with the British High King Vortigern for more land.

At her father's orders, Rowena got Vortigern drunk at a feast - *the British king's lust for pagan women was prompted by the Devil*.

<sup>354</sup> **Rhyddfedd Frych** (435? -?) brother to Cadell *Ddynllwg son of Cadeyern Fendigaid (Catigern)*, sometimes called Rhyddfedd ap Catigern was a late 5<sup>th</sup> century King of Powys, Wales.

<sup>355</sup> **Rowena**, as "the Mother of the English Nation," personified Saxon treachery and paganism.

The name "Rowena" does not appear in Old English sources such as Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* or the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. It was first recorded by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his 12<sup>th</sup>-century *Historia regum Britanniae* (in various spellings, including Ronwen, Renwein, and Romwenna), and may represent a medieval Latin corruption of some lost Germanic or Old English name. Another possibility is that it comes from the Welsh, where the name becomes Rhonwen, and could be connected to the word *rhawn* "horsehair", which might be significant given her father and uncle's association with horses, but this is simply conjecture based on similarity of pronunciation.

He was so enchanted by her *that he agreed to give her father whatever he wanted in exchange for permission to marry her (the fate of Vortigern's first wife, Sevira, daughter of Magnus Maximus, is not specified)*.

Hengist demanded the Kingdom of Kent, which Vortigern foolishly granted him.

This agreement proved disastrous for the Britons and allowed the Saxons to strengthen their foothold in Britain considerably.

Vortigern "and his wives" (Rowena is not named directly) were burned alive by heavenly fire in the fortress of Craig Gwrtheyrn (Vortigern's Rock) in north Wales - *supra*.

Vortigern's friendly dealings with the Saxons, especially his allowing even more settlers to join them, causing his sons by his first wife to rebel.

His eldest son **Vortimer** took the British throne and drove out the Saxons,

but he was poisoned by Rowena - in the role of his wicked stepmother.<sup>356</sup>

iv

### Treachery of the Long Knives

It happened however after the death of Vortimer, son of King Vortigern,

and after the return of Hengist with his forces, they called for a false Council, so that they might work sorrow to Vortigern with his army.

For they sent legates to ask for peace, that there might be perpetual friendship between them.

So Vortigern himself with the elders by birth of his people considered the matter

and carefully thought over what they might do.

And the same opinion was with them all, that they should make peace,

and their legates went back and afterwards called together the conference,

so that on either side the **Brittones et Saxones** should come together as one without arms,

so that friendship should be sealed.

And Hengistus ordered the whole of his household that each one should hide his knife (*artavum*) under his foot in the middle of his shoe:

And when I shall call out to you and say "*Eu nimet saxas*" (Hey, draw your swords!),

then draw your knives (*cultellos*) from the soles of your shoes, and

fall upon them,

and stand strongly against them.

And do not kill their king,

but seize him for the sake of my daughter whom I gave to him in matrimony,

because it is better for us that he should be ransomed from our hands.

And they brought together the conference,

and the Saxons - which probably includes Angles and Jutes - speaking in a friendly way,

meanwhile were thinking in a wolfish way,

arrived at the banquet armed with their long knives (*seaxes*) hidden on their persons

and sociably they sat down man beside Saxon beside Briton.

<sup>356</sup> With her use of seduction and potions, Geoffrey's **Rowena** served as a basis for later Arthurian villainesses such as **Morgan le Fay**, and can be contrasted with his positive portrayal of British queens like **Cordelia** and **Marcia**. Another similar character is **Estrildis**, the rival of Queen Gwendolen, also a beautiful Germanic princess.

During the feast, Hengistus, as he had said, spoke out - and on his given word of command, they pulled their knives and killed the unarmed Britons sitting next to them.

All the three hundred elders of King Vortigern were slaughtered but Vortigern himself was spared.

Yea, all his men were butchered, except **Eldol**, Consul or Count of Gloucester, a key supporter of Aurelius Ambrosius who helped him defeat the Saxons.

He grabbed a stick up off the ground and killed 70 men in his escape. Only he was imprisoned, and was chained, and he gave to them many regions for the ransom of his soul (i.e. life), that is Est Saxum, Sut saxum , Middelseaxan, with other districts under his control which they named.

The incident took place at a banquet *in modern-day Wiltshire*, ostensibly arranged to seal a peace treaty, which may have been the cession of Essex and Sussex in exchange for intermarriage between Rowena *daughter of Saxon chieftain Hengest*, and Vortigern.

Eldol defeated Hengist in hand-to-hand combat at the battle at Kaerconan/Cunungeburg, which may be the town of Conisbrough, and beheaded him.

• • •

#### Saint Germanus of Auxerre



*Saint Germain l'Auxerrois statue*

**Germanus of Auxerre** (Welsh: Garmon Sant) son of *Rusticus and Germanilla* (c. 378 – c. 448) was a bishop of Auxerre *in Late Antique Gaul* - and his family was one of the noblest in Gaul in the latter portion of the fourth century.

He is best remembered for his journey to combat **Pelagianism** in Britain in or around 429 AD.

He received the very best education provided by the distinguished schools of Arles and Lyons, and then went to Rome, where he studied eloquence and civil law. He practiced there before the tribunal of the prefect for some years with great success.

His high birth and brilliant talents brought him into contact with the court, and he married Eustachia, a lady highly esteemed in imperial circles. The emperor sent him back to Gaul, appointing him one of the six dukes, entrusted with the government of the Gallic provinces.

He resided at Auxerre.

At length he incurred the displeasure of the bishop, **Saint Amator**<sup>357</sup> by hanging hunting trophies on a certain tree, which in earlier times had been the scene of pagan worship. Amator remonstrated with him in vain.

One day when the duke was absent, the bishop had the tree cut down and the trophies burnt.

Fearing the anger of the duke, who wished to kill him, he fled and appealed to the prefect Julius for permission to confer the tonsure on Germain.

This being granted, Amator, who felt that his own life was drawing to a close, returned.

When the duke came to the church, Amator caused the doors to be barred and gave him the tonsure against his will, telling him to live as one destined to be his successor, and forthwith made him a deacon.

When in a short time Amator died, Germain was unanimously chosen to fill the vacant see, being consecrated 7 July, 418.

His education now served him in good stead in the government of the diocese, which he administered with great sagacity. He distributed his goods among the poor, practiced great austerities, and built a large monastery dedicated to **Saints Cosmas and Damian** on the banks of the Yonne, whither he was wont to retire in his spare moments.

*ii*

#### *Saint Germain visits Britain.*

Around 429, shortly after the Romans had withdrawn from Britain, a Gaulish assembly of bishops chose Germanus and **Lupus, Bishop of Troyes**, to visit the island.

It was alleged that **Pelagianism** was rife among the British clergy,

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<sup>357</sup> Young Amator studied theology, but married a holy woman of Langres, venerated locally as **Sainte Marth **, in order to please his parents. After their wedding, they mutually agreed to live together as brother and sister. Marth  subsequently became a nun and Amator received the clerical tonsure. He was ordained bishop of Auxerre in 388 and governed the see until his death 30 years later. During this 30-year episcopacy, he built two churches and converted the remaining pagans in his diocese. He introduced the relics of **Saint Cyrus** into France, thus propagating this saint's cult.

• • •

#### Quriaqos and Julietta

**Julietta** and her three-year (sometimes described as three-month) old **Quriaqos** had fled to Tarsus and were identified as Christians. Julietta was tortured, and her three-year-old son, being held by the governor of Tarsus, scratched the governor's face and was killed by being thrown down by some stairs. Julietta did not weep but celebrated the fact that her son had earned the crown of martyrdom. In anger, the governor then decreed that Julietta's sides should be ripped apart with hooks, and then she was beheaded. Her body, along with that of Quriaqos, was flung outside the city, on the heap of bodies belonging to criminals, but the two maids rescued the corpses of the mother and child and buried them in a nearby field.

led by a British bishop's son named *Agricola*.

Germanus went to combat the threat and satisfy the Pope that the British church would not break away from the **Augustinian teachings of divine grace.**

On the way to Britain they passed through Nanterre, where Germanus noticed in the crowd which met them a young girl, whom he bade live as one espoused to Christ, and who later became

### St. Geneviève of Paris.

Germanus and Lupus confronted the British clergy at a public meeting

before a huge crowd in Britain.

The Pelagians were described as being 'conspicuous for riches, brilliant in dress and surrounded by a fawning multitude.'

The bishops debated and, despite having no popular support, Germanus was able to defeat the Pelagians using his superior rhetorical skills.

Constantius also recounts the miraculous healing of the blind daughter of 'a man with tribunician power.'<sup>358</sup>

iii

Germanus led the native Britons to a victory against Pictish and Saxon raiders,

at a mountainous site near a river, *of which Mold in North Wales is the traditional location.*

The enemy approaching, the former general put himself at the head of the Christians.

He led them into a vale between two high mountains, and ordered his troops shout when he gave them a sign.

When the Saxon pirates came near them, he cried out thrice, Alleluia, which was followed by the whole army of Britons.

The sound echoed from the hills with a noise so loud that the barbarians,

judging from the shout that they were facing a mighty army, flung down their arms and ran away, leaving behind their baggage and booty.

iv

Immediately after the debate with the Pelagians, Germanus gave thanks for his victory at the grave of Saint Alban, which was likely in some sort of tomb or basilica.

The cult of Saint Alban had been established before Germanus' visit to Britain.

That night, Germanus claimed that Saint Alban came to him in a dream,

revealing his identity and the details of his martyrdom.

When Germanus awoke, he had the account written down in *tituli*, possibly to be engraved on the walls or illustrated placards at a church site in Auxerre.<sup>359</sup>

Germanus then deposited some of the bones of continental saints in the basilica,

and took a sample of the earth at the site of Alban's martyrdom, which still bore the marks of the martyr's blood.

### Saint Alban

<sup>358</sup> This use of the word tribune may imply the existence of some form of post-Roman government system. However, in Constantius' lifetime tribune had acquired a looser definition, and often was used to indicate any military officer, whether part of the Imperial army or part of a town militia.

It is not possible to know what impact Germanus' visit really had on Pelagianism in Britain. The link with **Saint Patrick**, traditionally portrayed as his pupil, is also contested in recent scholarship.

<sup>359</sup> This account forms the basis of the *Passio Albani*, the foundational text of all information about Saint Alban.

**Saint Alban** (estimated to have died c. 209 – 305) is venerated as the

first recorded British Christian martyr,

and is considered to be the British protomartyr.

Along with his fellow saints "**Amphibalus**," and **Julius, and Aaron**,

Alban is one of four named martyrs recorded from Roman Britain.

He is traditionally believed to have been beheaded in the Roman city

of Verulamium (*modern St. Alban's Cathedral*)

sometime during the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century,

and his cult has been celebrated there since ancient times.



Saint Alban, St Mary, Sledmere, East Riding of Yorkshire, England.

ii

Sometime in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century, Christians began to suffer "cruel persecution."

Alban met a Christian priest fleeing from "persecutors," and sheltered him in his house for a number of days.

The priest (who later came to be called **Amphibalus**, meaning "cloak" in Latin) prayed and "kept watch" day and night, and Alban was so impressed with the priest's faith and piety that he found himself emulating the priest, and soon converted to Christianity.

Eventually it came to the ears of an unnamed "impious prince" that Alban was sheltering the priest, and this prince gave orders for Roman soldiers to make a strict search of Alban's house.

As they came to seize the priest, Alban put on the priest's cloak and clothing,

and presented himself to the soldiers in place of his guest.

Alban was brought before the judge, who just then happened to be standing at the altar, offering sacrifices to "devils" (Pagan gods).

When the judge heard that Alban had offered himself up in place of the priest,

he became enraged that Alban would shelter a person who "despised and blasphemed the gods,"

and as Alban had given himself up in this Christian's place, Alban was sentenced to endure all the punishments that were to be inflicted upon the priest,

unless he would comply with the pagan rites of their religion.

Alban refused, and declared "I worship and adore the true and living God who created all things."

(These words are still used in prayer at St Alban's Abbey).

The enraged judge ordered Alban scourged,

thinking that a whipping would shake the constancy of his heart,  
but Alban bore these torments patiently and joyfully.  
When the judge realized that these tortures would not shake his faith,  
he ordered that Alban be beheaded.

Alban was led to execution,  
and he presently came to a fast flowing river which could not be  
crossed (believed to be the River Ver).  
There was a bridge, but a mob of curious townspeople who wished to  
watch the execution had so clogged the bridge that the execution  
party could not cross.  
Filled with an ardent desire to arrive quickly at martyrdom,  
Alban raised his eyes to heaven,  
and the river dried up, allowing Alban and his captors to cross over  
on dry land.  
The astonished executioner cast down his sword and fell at Alban's  
feet,  
moved by divine inspiration,  
and praying that he might either suffer with Alban, or if possible be  
executed for him.  
The other executioners hesitated to pick up his sword,  
and in the meanwhile,  
Alban and the multitude went about 500 paces to a gently sloping  
hill,  
completely covered with all kinds of wild flowers,  
and overlooking a beautiful plain  
(a fittingly beautiful place to be enriched and sanctified by a martyr's  
blood).

When Alban reached the summit of the hill he began to thirst, and  
prayed God would give him water,  
whereupon a spring immediately sprang up at his feet.  
It was at this place that his head was struck off,  
as well as that of the first Roman soldier who was miraculously  
converted and refused to execute him.  
However, immediately after delivering the fatal stroke, the eyes of the  
second executioner popped out of his head  
and dropped to the ground along with Alban's head,  
so that this second executioner could not rejoice over Alban's death.  
Alban's head rolled downhill after his execution, and a well sprang up  
where it stopped.

Upon hearing of these miracles, the astonished judge ordered further  
persecutions to cease,  
and began to honour the saint's death.<sup>360</sup>

### XXX

## The Last of the Romans

**Ambrosius Aurelian**, Welsh: *Emrys Wledig*; called **Aurelius Ambrosius** -  
a paternal nephew of **King Aldroenus of Brittany** son of  
*Constantine* and an unnamed Briton noblewoman,  
adoptive grandson (on his mother's side) of  
**Guthelinus/Vitalinus**, Bishop of London,  
younger brother of Constans and older brother of Uther Pendragon  
and the uncle of King Arthur, the brother of Arthur's father Uther  
Pendragon  
was a war leader of the Romano-British  
who won an important battle against the Anglo-Saxons in the fifth  
century.  
*This genealogy makes Constantine and his children descendants of Conan Meriadoc, legendary founder of the line of Kings of Brittany.*

### ii

<sup>360</sup> St Albans Cathedral now stands near to the believed site of his execution,  
and a well does exist at the bottom of the hill, Holywell Hill.

Ambrosius was possibly of high birth and very likely a Christian -  
his parents, who had worn the purple,<sup>361</sup> were slain by the Saxons  
and he was among the few survivors of their initial invasion.  
Ambrosius and Uther were supposedly raised by their adoptive  
maternal grandfather **Guthelinus/Vitalinus**

Ambrosius organized the survivors into an armed force and achieved  
the first military victory over the Saxon invaders.  
However, this victory was not decisive:  
"Sometimes the Saxons and sometimes the citizens [meaning the  
Romano-British inhabitants] were victorious."

### iii

"When the army of the enemy had exterminated or scattered the  
native peoples, they returned home  
and the Britons slowly began to recover strength and courage.  
They emerged from their hiding-places and with one accord they  
prayed for the help of God  
that they might not be completely annihilated.  
Their leader at that time was a certain Ambrosius Aurelian, a  
discreet man,  
who was, as it happened, the sole member of the Roman race who  
had survived this storm in which his parents,  
who bore a royal and famous name,  
had perished.  
Under his leadership the Britons regained their strength,  
challenged their victors to battle, and, with God's help, won the day."

### iv

Vortigern ruled in fear of Ambrosius.  
Ambrosius' influence was formidable,  
since Vortigern considered him more of a threat than northern  
invaders and attempts to restore Roman rule in Britain.

"On the death of Vortimer, the strength of the Britons grew faint,  
their diminished hopes went backwards;  
and straight-way they would have come to ruin, had not Ambrosius,  
the sole survivor of the Romans,  
who was monarch of the realm after Vortigern,  
repressed the overweening barbarians through the distinguished  
achievements of the warlike Arthur."

### iv

Ambrosius was poisoned by his enemy **Eopa**,  
and Uther Pendragon succeeds him.  
*The role of warrior king is shared by Uther and his son Arthur.*

## Riothamus

<sup>361</sup> Roman Emperors and Roman males of the senatorial class wore clothes with a **purple band** to denote their class so the reference to purple may be to an aristocratic heritage. Roman military tribunes (*tribuni militum*), senior officers in Roman legions, wore a similar **purple band** so the reference may be to a family background of military leadership. The tradition was old as the togas and palliums of already ancient senators and tribunes were trimmed with the purple band. In the church "the purple" is a euphemism for blood and therefore "**wearing the purple**" may be a **reference to martyrdom** or a bishop's robe. In addition, in the later Roman Empire both Roman consuls and governors of consular rank also wore clothes with a **purple fringe**. The *Notitia Dignitatum*, a Roman catalogue of official posts, lists four or five provincial governors in Roman Britain and two of them were of consular rank. One was the governor of Maxima Caesariensis and the other that of Valentia. The parent who wore the purple may well have been one of these governors, whose names were not recorded.

**Riothamus**<sup>362</sup> (also spelled **Riutimus** or **Riotimus**), "King of the Britons," was a Romano-British military leader, who was active circa AD 470. He fought against the Goths in alliance with the declining Roman Empire - but the extent of his realm is unclear.

Riothamus supported the Romans against the Visigoths led by **Euric** (who lived c. 440 – 484). Riothamus brought a British army to supplement Roman forces but suffered defeat fighting against overwhelming odds when the Goths intercepted his force:

**Euric, king of the Visigoths**, perceived the frequent change of Roman Emperors and strove to hold Gaul by his own right. The Emperor Anthemius heard of it and asked the Brittones for aid. Their King Riotimus came with twelve thousand men into the state of the Bituriges by the way of Ocean, and was received as he disembarked from his ships.

Euric came against them with an innumerable army, and after a long fight he routed Riotimus before the Romans could join him. So when he had lost a great part of his army, he fled with all the men he could gather together, and came to the Burgundians, a neighboring tribe then allied to the Romans. But Euric seized the Gallic city of **Arvernus**; for the Emperor Anthemius was now dead.

**Arvandus**, the Praetorian Prefect of Gaul, wrote a letter to Euric stating that "the Britons stationed beyond the Loire should be attacked" and that the Visigoths and Burgundians (who were at the time clients of the Romans) should divide Gaul between them. But Arvandus betrayed Riothamus.

### XXXI

#### Uther Pendragon Utepandragûn



<sup>362</sup> Riothamus is a Latinization of the Brythonic personal name \*Rigotamos, meaning 'king-most', 'supreme king' or 'highest king.' Though it is still a matter of debate, several scholars consider his life to have been one of the possible sources for the King Arthur legend.

*Uther Pendragon*, by Howard Pyle from *The Story of King Arthur and His Knights* (1903).

**Uther Pendragon**<sup>363</sup> (King Uther Welsh: *Uthyr Pendragon*, *Uthyr Bendragon*) was a legendary king of sub-Roman Britain and the father of **King Arthur**. He was born in Bourges, (in central France).

He was a strong king and a defender of the people.

He took an army to Brittany to fight against **King Claudas** of Bourges,<sup>364</sup> whose kingdom was named "Terre Deserte," or "Land Laid Waste," so called because of the destruction Uther Pendragon had wrought there.

Emrys/Merlin magically disguised Uther to look like his enemy **Duke Gorlois of Cornwall - infer**, enabling Uther to sleep with Gorlois' wife **Lady Igraine**. Thus Arthur, "the once and future king," was an illegitimate child. This act of conception occurs the very night that Uther's troops dispatch Gorlois.<sup>365</sup>

ii

With Aurelius on the throne, Uther leads his brother in arms to Ireland to help Emrys/Merlin bring the stones of **Stonehenge** from there to Britain. Later, while Aurelius is ill, Uther leads his army against Vortigern's son Paschent and his Saxon allies.

On the way to the battle, he sees a comet in the shape of a dragon, which Merlin interprets as presaging Aurelius's death and Uther's glorious future.

Uther wins the battle and takes the epithet "Pendragon," and returns to find that Aurelius has been poisoned by an assassin.

He becomes king and orders the construction of two gold dragons, one of which he uses as his standard.

He secures Britain's frontiers and quells Saxon uprisings with the aids of his retainers,

one of whom is **Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall - infer**.

At a banquet celebrating their victories, Uther becomes obsessively enamoured of Gorlois' wife **Igerna (Igraine)**, and a war ensues between Uther and his vassal.

Gorlois sends Igerna to the impregnable castle of **Tintagel** for protection

while he himself is besieged by Uther in another town.

Uther consults with Emrys/Merlin who uses his magic to transform the king into the likeness of Gorlois and thus gain access to Igerna at Tintagel.

He spends the night with her and they conceive Arthur, but the next morning it is discovered that Gorlois had been killed.

Uther marries Igerna and they have a daughter called Anna (in later romances she is called Morgause and is usually Igerna's daughter by her previous marriage).

Morgause later marries King Lot and becomes the mother of Gawain and Mordred.

<sup>363</sup> Uther's epithet *Pendragon* literally means "Chief-Dragon," but in a figurative sense, "foremost leader" or "chief of warriors." Uther acquired the epithet when he witnessed a portentous dragon-shaped comet, which inspired him to use dragons on his standards. According to Robert de Boron and the Grail cycle based on his work, it was Uther's older brother (elsewhere called Aurelius Ambrosius) who saw the comet and received the name "Pendragon", Uther taking his epithet after his death

<sup>364</sup> a situation resembling that of the historical ruler Riothamus who went to Brittany to fight ravagers based in Bourges.

<sup>365</sup> This theme of illegitimate conception is repeated in Arthur's siring of **Mordred** by his own half-sister **Morgause** in the later prose romances. It is Mordred who mortally wounds King Arthur in the *Battle of Camlann*.

Uther Pendragon killed Hengest after an assassination attempt by the Saxon leader and Emrys/Merlin created the **Table Round** for him.

**King Arthur** son of *Uther Pendragon* was a legendary British leader who led the defence of Britain against Saxon invaders in the late-5<sup>th</sup> and early-6<sup>th</sup> centuries and established an empire over Britain, Ireland, Iceland, Norway and Gaul.

**XXXII**

**King Arthur**

**TO BE CONTINUED**



